

THE FRENCH IDEA OF HISTORY

THE FRENCH IDEA OF HISTORY



JOSEPH DE MAISTRE
AND HIS HEIRS,
1794–1854

CAROLINA ARMENTEROS

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
Ithaca and London

Copyright © 2011 by Cornell University

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, address Cornell University Press, Sage House, 512 East State Street, Ithaca, New York 14850.

First published 2011 by Cornell University Press

Printed in the United States of America

[CIP to come]

Cornell University Press strives to use environmentally responsible suppliers and materials to the fullest extent possible in the publishing of its books. Such materials include vegetable-based, low-VOC inks and acid-free papers that are recycled, totally chlorine-free, or partly composed of nonwood fibers. For further information, visit our website at www.cornellpress.cornell.edu.

Cloth printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*In memory of Danute Vasiliauskas
with all my gratitude*

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Note on Editions, Translations, and References xi

List of Abbreviations xiii

Introduction: Conservatism and History 1

A Brief Intellectual Biography 20

PART ONE: JOSEPH DE MAISTRE AND THE IDEA OF HISTORY, 1794–1820

1. Joseph de Maistre against Jean-Jacques
Rousseau: The Statistical Beginnings
of Historical Thought, 1794–96 35

2. Maistrian Epistemology and Pedagogy
in Historical Perspective 82

3. A Europeanist Theory of History:
Du pape 115

4. Redemption by Suffering: Social
Violence and Historical Development
in the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* 156

5. Returning the Universe to God:
Time, Will, and Reason in *Les soirées
de Saint-Petersbourg* 183

PART TWO: HISTORICAL THOUGHT IN FRANCE, 1798–1854

6. The New Truth of Historical
Knowledge: Liberty, Order, and the Rise
of the Social Fact, 1797–1848 217

7. Historical Progress and the Logic of Sacrifice, 1822–54	255
8. The Metapolitics of History: Socialism, Positivism, and Tradition, 1820–48	283
Conclusion: History and Paradox	315
<i>Bibliography</i>	325
<i>Index</i>	341

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began in 2000 during my research in history at the University of Cambridge. Throughout the years many people have helped me prepare it. My deepest gratitude is to Gareth Stedman Jones, whose untiring and ever-stimulating commentary helped the book take shape in its early stages. In France, Francine Markovits guided and encouraged me, sharing her invaluable knowledge of philosophy. Other scholars have also helped me down the often tortuous path of my investigations, offering leads, references, insights, and suggestions: Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, Keith Baker, Philippe Barthelet, Dan Edelstein, Kevin Erwin, Marta Fattori, Pierre Glaudes, Michael Kohlhauer, Jill Kraye, Jacques Le Brun, Malcolm Mansfield, Alexander Martin, Michael Sonenscher, Ryan Song, Benjamin Thurston, Dale Van Kley, and Cynthia Whittaker. I also acknowledge most gratefully the extremely helpful comments of the anonymous reviewers for Cornell University Press.

I owe a warm and very special thanks to Richard Lebrun, for sharing with me the enormous wealth of his knowledge of Maistre and for what are by now many years of mentorship, encouragement, and collaboration. My most heartfelt gratitude also to Quentin Skinner, whose insights and scholarship have been so helpful at several crucial junctures in my work, and who, through the years, has been an incessant inspiration for what a historian should be. This book would also be weaker in several respects without the unfailingly enlightening and erudite conversation of Jean-Yves Pranchère.

At the National Library of Russia, the erudition of Natalia Elaguina proved crucial; and at the State Historical Museum in Moscow, Alexandra Kukushkina and Fyodor Petrov graciously bestowed their guidance and knowledge. My deep gratitude also to the extremely helpful, supportive, and efficient personnel of the Faculty of History, Cambridge, most particularly Liz Haresnape, John Dolan, and Judith Robb; and to all those who, at Cambridge University Library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the Archives de Savoie in Chambéry, kindly answered my queries. The Gallica

programme of the Bibliothèque has been exceptionally useful for my research and I owe a large debt to all those who make it possible.

I thank most warmly the British Academy, Wolfson College, Cambridge, and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Groningen for generously granting me the postdoctoral research fellowships during which I did much of the research and writing for this book. I am very thankful as well to King's College, Cambridge, for the financial assistance it consistently provided, and to the Ferris Fund, the Lightfoot Fund, and the Prince Consort and Thirlwall Fund of the Faculty of History, Cambridge, for making possible my archival research abroad and the acquisition of materials vital to my work. Mouna Ben Hassine kindly assisted me with formatting the document and I am extremely grateful to her.

Finally, I owe more than I can say to my family, especially my mother Agnès, my late grandfather Carlos, my grandmother Lolita, and my uncle Juan Luis; as I do to Safa Ben Hassine, Armando Capobianco, Jennifer Sine, and Sam Smith for their friendship.

Portions of this book have been previously published. An earlier draft of chapter 1 appeared as two articles: "From Human Nature to Normal Humanity: Joseph de Maistre, Rousseau, and the Origins of Moral Statistics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, 1 (2007): 107–30; and "Parabolas and the Fate of Nations: Early Conservative Historicism in Joseph de Maistre's *De la souveraineté du peuple*," *History of Political Thought* 28, 2 (2007): 230–52. Part of chapter 3 was published in "Communio Ecclesiology and the World: Ecumenical Intimations of Joseph de Maistre's *Du pape*," *Ecclesiology* 3, 2: 215–33, copyright 2007 by Koninklijke Brill NV. Some material from chapter 4 appeared in "Revolutionary Violence and the End of History: The Divided Self in Francophone Thought, 1762–1914," in *Historicising the French Revolution*, edited by Carolina Armenteros, Tim Blanning, Isabel DiVanna, and Dawn Dodds (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 2–38. Last, a summary of part 1 was published as "The Historical Thought of Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821)" in the *Journal of Political Science and Sociology* 14 (2011): 17–32. I would like to thank the original publishers of these pieces for allowing me to reprint them here, whether partially or in toto.

NOTE ON EDITIONS, TRANSLATIONS, AND REFERENCES

In an effort to transmit concepts as Joseph de Maistre and his interpreters read, wrote, and understood them, I have consulted all except ancient Greek primary sources in the original language. Where a printed edition was not available, I have used Internet editions.

In the interests of argumentation, I have translated primary sources myself. In translating Maistre's texts, however, I have benefited extensively from Richard Lebrun's English editions of Joseph de Maistre's works, especially *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), *Considerations on France* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998). Like Lebrun, I have left titles like "Monsieur" untranslated, to remind the reader that the original texts are in French. All translations are my own unless otherwise referenced.

The *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille* cited in this book correspond to the files of the CD-ROM du Fonds de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 1996.

When used to cite Maistrian writings, OC is the abbreviation of *Oeuvres complètes de Joseph de Maistre*, 14 vols. (Lyon: Vitte and Perrussel, 1884–87; facsimile edition, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1979). All references to Maistre's *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* are to the edition printed in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, edited by Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007).

Wherever possible, I have used "human being," "humanity," "human-kind," and "men and women" rather than "man." But where a nineteenth-century writer clearly meant "man," I have adopted this usage in order to preserve the original meaning as accurately as possible.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>OC</i>	<i>Oeuvres complètes</i>
<i>RBS</i>	Russian Bible Society
<i>REM</i>	<i>Revue des études maistriennes</i>
<i>RER</i>	<i>Rite écossais rectifié</i>
<i>SVEC</i>	<i>Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century</i>

THE FRENCH IDEA OF HISTORY

Introduction

Conservatism and History

This is a book about the beginnings of historical thinking as a philosophical enterprise. The historical rupture represented by the French Revolution compelled contemporaries to reflect on the nature and meaning of history. For the generation educated in the downfall of a whole world, history was no longer dead and distant, as it had often been for the detached writers of the Enlightenment. It was alive in blood and fire.¹ Some who remained religious during those years felt history with particular intensity, awakening suddenly to the fear that God might have abandoned humankind altogether, and that his ways through time must be discovered if faith was to be kept and defended. To many who experienced the Revolution, history properly understood revealed Providence's designs. This book focuses on the historical thought of a man to whom the Revolution brought profound spiritual anxiety. And it tells the story of the quiet upheaval that his reflections, dispersed across political and philosophical boundaries, effected in nineteenth-century French thought and politics.

1. Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration*, 2nd ed., L'Histoire Series (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), 337–38.

2 INTRODUCTION

I

For nearly forty years Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) led a calm, uneventful life in the city of Chambéry, serving first as a magistrate and then as a senator of Savoie² until history, in the form of the French revolutionary army, erupted into his life in September of 1792. This event signaled the beginning of his permanent exile from home, and the start of a brilliant and tortuous writing career centered on the idea of history. Defending the fledgling conservative position that Maistre adopted soon after leaving Chambéry implied reflecting on history. As Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) observed, conservative thinking is historical thinking. There is a certain inclination toward the concrete, combined with a taste for what is rather than what ought to be, that renders conservatism particularly prone to expressing itself in historical terms.³ Even more, for Maistre history was a moral force, the vehicle of Providence, the site for the accumulation of experience, and the tool for discovering what humanity actually is. It was a nearly total means of explanation, guided by a God who was a source of illumination. Maistre's *Considérations sur la France* (1797) conjured a terrifying Providence, an agent of regenerative punishment that has remained deeply imprinted in the public perception as characteristic of his notion of divinity. One purpose of this book is to show that, more than a punitive agent, Maistrian Providence is a provider of knowledge that bestows radical freedom by revealing its ways to humanity (see chapter 3). In this guise, it is the instrument of divine education,⁴ the incarnation of the Enlightenment belief that human beings, no longer hopelessly embroiled in the toils of original sin, can be reformed and improved by knowledge.⁵

Maistre also entertained a set of assumptions about the social and psychological effects of historical evidence that resulted in a distinctive means of deploying historical facts for the purposes of philosophical and political contention. Importantly, Maistre never wrote history—one reason that his historical thought has been scantily attended to.⁶ But his writings contained

2. Maistre was named a Senator on May 2, 1788; he abandoned the position when he fled from Chambéry on September 22, 1792.

3. Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, 2nd ed., ed. Nico Stehr, ed. and trans. David Kettler and Volker Meja (London: Routledge, 1997), 100.

4. On God as a teacher in Maistrian thought, see Élcio Verçosa Filho, "The Pedagogical Nature of Maistre's Thought," in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, ed. Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011), 191–219.

5. John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 288.

6. See, however, Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Ordre de la raison, déraison de l'histoire: L'historicisme de Maistre et ses sources classiques," in *Joseph de Maistre*, ed. Philippe Barthelet, 366–90 (Les dossiers H, Geneva: L'Âge d'Homme, 2005); and Michael Kohlhauser, "L'histoire-mal: Approches pour

both an overwhelming wealth of historical erudition and deeply historicizing themes. They expounded that history is the standard of social, political, and moral truth; that this truth can be expressed in a myriad particular and historically contingent ways; and that history itself develops organically through set stages and according to set causes.

Describing Maistre's historical thought is often an exercise in the recovery of the implicit. A decrier of philosophical systems, Maistre never attempted to craft a comprehensive theory of history. Nor did he value history particularly as an educational subject. While in Russia, he even recommended that history be removed from school curricula, on grounds that it was a "free teaching" that anyone could learn by reading, or by being read to, every day. Simultaneously, however—and in keeping with his intent to use history to uncover God's designs—Maistre praised philosophical history, observing that in the past, "special chairs of history" were "confided to superior men, who *reason about history* more than teaching history."⁷ He also insisted, in nearly every book he wrote, that history is "experimental politics," the ultimate source of knowledge, God's medium for conveying to humanity philosophical truth and falsehood, political right and wrong.⁸ The result of this theological interest in history was that, rather than serve as the object of philosophical judgment, history became the criterion for it. Under Maistre's pen, everything—reason, science, knowledge—was historicized and temporalized in order to be known. Political philosophy itself transmuted into a historical problem.

When he turned history into the measure of politics, Maistre was unwittingly sharpening a polemical knife that would one day be pointed by his enemies at his allies. The liberals of the Restoration (1814–30) used historiography as a political language to evade state censorship. If during the Revolution "émigrés like Chateaubriand, Maistre, Barruel, had both the incentive and the time to draw up their indictments" of the Revolution through historical chronicling, "in the Restoration, the tables are turned; it is the men of the Revolution, cut off from politics, who turn to history to state their case."⁹

un (non-) lieu littéraire," in *Imaginaires du mal*, ed. Myriam Watthee-Delmotte and Paul-Augustin Deproost, 189–208 (Paris and Louvain-la-neuve: Cerf Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2000).

7. Joseph de Maistre, *OC* (Lyon: Vitte and Perrussel, 1884–87; facsimile edition Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1979), 8:182–83.

8. E.g., *OC*, 7:539.

9. Stanley Mellon, *The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 6.

4 INTRODUCTION

This book contends that the historical reflections of French-speaking counterrevolutionaries during the Revolution and the Empire were far more than historical chronicling. One may be tempted to believe that the Counter-Revolution found in history only a refuge of safety, a sanctuary to which to retreat from contemporary turmoil and find solace in an immobilized past. The liberal and socialist historians of the nineteenth century can consequently emerge, *ex nihilo*, as the unprecedented creators of the great historical synthesis of their century.¹⁰ Two of my guiding arguments in this volume are that, rather than spend its years of exile in a state of unreflective repetition, the Counter-Revolution was the innovative and indispensable link between the Enlightenment and the postrevolutionary Left in matters historical—the decisive, if neglected, intermediary between the philosophers of history of the French eighteenth century, and the historians and historical philosophers of the nineteenth. Maistre himself was the foremost and most creative representative of this mode of historical thought, which grew in complete independence from far better-known developments in contemporary Germany. His historically inclined works not only fueled the Restoration's political disputes but were also a major source of the future-oriented statistics of the Directory and the Empire, and of the traditionalist, socialist, and positivist philosophies of history that arose from 1820 to 1854. They were, in fact, crucial to the rise of an autochthonous Francophone tradition of historical thinking that historicized Enlightenment social and political philosophy, transporting ancient arguments to modern contexts and flourishing independently of developments in Germany.

Understanding Maistre's mediation between the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century requires clarifying the relationship between conservative theories of history and prior eighteenth-century models. The *philosophes* had been keenly interested in history: it was Voltaire (1694–1778) who first composed, under the pseudonym of the abbé Bazin, an essay entitled *La philosophie de l'histoire* (1763). Yet the *philosophes* looked on history from afar and on high. *Candide* (1759), Voltaire's literary masterpiece, took the distant, anodyne narration of misery and catastrophe that Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1695–97) identified as the invariable content of human history to heights of irony and absurdity. The *philosophes* also equated history with the rational progress of human collectives—as Voltaire again did in the *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1753)—or recounted the vicissi-

10. Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London: Routledge, 1993).

tudes of universal “Man” and the linear development of abstract reason—like Condorcet in the *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain* (1795). Early conservatives, by contrast, reflected on the history of specific, historically existing institutions, governments, traditions, sciences, and languages. For them, human beings did not exist as intangible individuals, but as national, biological, religious, and political beings whose moral activity transformed the world. The *philosophes’* linear time no longer applied. Time was irregularly broken by the successes and failures of historical experiments, and measured by the organic growth of institutions, the moral fortunes of social groups, and the intimacy of the human-divine relationship. The model grew partly out of the historical apologetics of the late eighteenth century. To combat unbelievers without faith in authority, French theologians proved religious truth through historical fact.¹¹ Maistre’s innovation was to deduce from their narratives a theory of historical meaning, and of the causes and stages of historical development.

Of the Francophone conservative trio he formed with Louis de Bonald (1754–1840) and François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848), Maistre was the more erudite scholar and the deeper thinker; so that if his works lacked the massive and immediate appeal of Chateaubriand’s *Génie du christianisme* (1802), their impact has endured tenaciously. Until now, this chapter in the history of history has remained unread, due in part to the nature of the material. If Maistre was a genial writer and a serious scholar, he was also an incidental thinker who read and wrote out of personal interest when his ministerial duties permitted him. He never formed a school. So although his works all share a highly distinctive style and theoretical perspective, they were often read as occasionally as they were written, by exceedingly diverse readers who endowed them with an essentially fragmentary posterity.

The existence and significance of Maistre’s philosophy of history has been further secreted by the assumption that early conservatism, as a stream of thought hostile to the Enlightenment, never endeavored to explain history in the light of reason. The notion of Counter-Enlightenment that Isaiah Berlin (1909–97) introduced has encouraged this point of view. Grouping together thinkers as diverse and even inimical as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Maistre, Berlin’s scholarship and some of that influenced by it conceptualize “reactionary” thought in terms of its political tastes and

11. William R. Everdell, *Christian Apologetics in France, 1730–1790: The Roots of Romantic Religion* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 109–43; and Robert R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939).

6 INTRODUCTION

rhetorical strategies, rather than its historical intellectual filiation.¹² One conclusion readily drawn is that conservatism is not only changeless, but also intellectually severed from the Enlightenment in all its possible definitions. Viewed as the simplistic recrudescence of Old Regime ideology, aged themes made progressively explicit, early conservatism is deemed to owe a largely reflexive life to the Revolution, to be a pure reaction to Enlightened modernity unrelated to the debates of its own time except by antithesis and negation. The movement's own self-representation as a set of intuitive insights drawn from tradition rather than modernity has done much to advance this view. But a very different account is now arising.¹³ Scholars are beginning to wonder whether the right-wing dissenters that Maistre so well represented, "misplaced and untimely, as Nietzsche said, are not the true founders of modernity and its most eminent representatives."¹⁴ The question is important; for reconceiving the early conservatives as the ultimate moderns also broaches the possibility that they incorporated sophisticated theories of sociopolitical change and progress—those sine qua nons of speculative historical philosophy—into their thought.

Maistrian studies, meanwhile, is experiencing a renaissance. Intellectual biographies of Maistre now exist in both French and English, and the first volume-length study of his intellectual relationship to the Enlightenment has just appeared.¹⁵ Scholars contributing to the *Revue des études maistriennes* (REM) (founded in 1974) have produced works on multiple aspects of his thought—including his epistemology, linguistics, economic theory, and philosophy of natural law.¹⁶ Richard Lebrun and Jean-Louis Darcel have cataloged Maistre's libraries and classified the contents of his reading notebooks, where the works of major and minor Enlightenment thinkers figure promi-

12. Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Hogarth, 1979); and Albert Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).

13. Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2006).

14. Antoine Compagnon, *Les antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: Galimard, 2005), 19.

15. *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*.

16. On epistemology, see Richard Lebrun, "Maistrian Epistemology," in *Maistre Studies*, ed. and trans. Richard A. Lebrun, 207–21 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988). On linguistics, Benjamin Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: Logos and Logomachy" (D. Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 2001). On economic theory, Jean Denizet, "Joseph de Maistre Economist," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence: Selected Studies*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun, 84–104 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); and Cara Camcastle, *The More Moderate Side of Joseph de Maistre: Views on Political Liberty and Political Economy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005). On philosophy of natural law, Richard A. Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law," in *Maistre Studies*, 193–206.

nently.¹⁷ Pierre Glaudes has published a new, critical edition of Maistre's works (2007), accompanied by a *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre* covering his major intellectual precursors and legatees. Philippe Barthelet's massive *Joseph de Maistre* (2005), which collects texts on Maistre by some 150 interpreters, is also generating new research on Maistre's colossally varied legacy.

II

Conservatism and the historical mentality were both so intimately linked in their early days that any study of Maistre's historical thought must be prefaced by a discussion of his politics, and of the reasons why he has been labeled a reactionary. The matter is complicated from the beginning by the problem of rhetoric. By the time he published *Du pape* in 1819, Maistre was well-known as a master of the French language. His rhetorical reputation had been born with his writing career.¹⁸ After the *Considérations sur la France* (1797) made his style widely known, it became impossible for him to commit a manuscript anonymously to the press. The clarity, beauty, and liveliness of his prose were admired on an international scale. Two monarchs, Louis XVIII (1755–1824) and Alexander I (1777–1825), tried to enlist his literary talents in their service: the first to edit the royal declaration of 1804, and the second to compose all edicts issued by the Russian court.¹⁹ Nor were the politically like-minded the only ones to heap praise on his writing skills. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869) could put political opinions aside and vanquish his personal dislike of the Savoyard to enthuse on the lively splendor of his prose:

That brief, nervous, lucid style, stripped of phrases, robust of limb, did not at all recall the softness of the eighteenth century, nor the declamations of the latest French books: it was born and steeped in the breath of the Alps; it was virgin, it was young, it was harsh and savage; it had no human respect, it felt its solitude; it improvised depth and form all at once. . . . That man was *new* among the *enfants du siècle*.²⁰

17. Jean-Louis Darcel, "Maistre's Libraries," in *Maistre Studies*, 3–41; and Richard A. Lebrun, "Maistre's Reading," in *Maistre Studies*, 42–64.

18. On the intersection between Maistre's political thought and his writing practices and personas, see Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun, eds., *The New enfant du siècle: Joseph de Maistre as a Writer*, St. Andrews Studies in French History and Culture (St Andrews: Centre for French History and Culture of the University of St Andrews, 2010).

19. Richard Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 205–7.

20. Alphonse de Lamartine, *Souvenirs et portraits* 3rd ed., (Paris: Hachette, Furne, Jouvet, Pagnerre, 1874), 1:188–89.

8 INTRODUCTION

Lamartine credited Maistre with stylistic novelty, but otherwise judged Maistre like other French liberal *litterateurs* did, notably Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–69), who in 1843 sketched Maistre’s most lasting portrait in the *Causeries du lundi* and the *Portraits littéraires*.²¹ Sainte-Beuve admired Maistre’s French greatly but was repulsed by the doctrines of submission it conveyed; and so in his bright, light, flowing style, he praised Maistre as a writer into oblivion as a political theorist. For almost a century afterward, Maistre’s defense of throne and altar was inextricably allied in France with the spirited language in which he undertook it—and displaced from any preceding intellectual traditions. The assumption was that as a great stylist he could be no innovator, and that his thought could derive from no sources other than the ancient and medieval ones he cited with such approval, and that seemed to suit his opinions so well.

In implicitly denouncing political theory as a contributor to Revolution, Maistre’s monarchism supported this interpretation admirably, as did his allegiances in the past. The *Considérations sur la France* (1797) and the counter-revolutionary pamphlets that antedated it in the 1790s established him clearly as a monarchist. In the next decade, the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (1809), a treatise attacking the viability of written constitutions—published without his knowledge and against his will—placed him ostensibly in the camp of the Ultras, those royalists who, “more royalist than the king,” sought to reestablish the Old Regime in its pristine form. Finally, the publication of *Du pape* another decade later put the finishing touches on Maistre’s reactionary portrait. It had become clear early on that the book was destined to occupy a place all its own in conservative literature. Chateaubriand had declined the editorship, feeling unequal to the punctilious editorial task required to keep *Du pape*’s radical anti-Gallicanism uncensored.²² In the end it was Maistre’s clerical connections who provided the required editor, and it was journals like *Le défenseur*, *Les archives*, *Le drapeau blanc*, and *L’ami de la religion et du roi*, closely associated with the clergy and the Ultra Party, that welcomed *Du pape* enthusiastically when it first appeared.²³ As we shall see, the Ultras ultimately remained disengaged from Maistre’s thought, and one aim of this book is to explain why. But their initial fervor did much to encourage the increasing association of Maistre with abstract, “reactionary,”

21. On Lamartine’s and Sainte-Beuve’s appraisals of Maistre as a writer, see Richard A. Lebrun, “Introduction: Assessing Maistre’s Style and Rhetoric,” in *New enfant du siècle*, 1–18.

22. Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d’un matérialiste mystique* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 336.

23. *Ibid.*, 338.

and “priestly” modes of thought, exclusively moralistic and unconcerned with the world, like the ones that Stendhal reproached Maistre for on opening *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821).²⁴

Maistre’s status as a “reactionary,” however, is exceedingly relative, and this book emphasizes his political moderation.²⁵ If by “reaction” is meant the desire to reinstitute prerevolutionary society, then Maistre was not a reactionary. Sympathetic to civic humanism, he was not, like Chateaubriand, intellectually yoked to the patriarchal and agrarian society of the Old Regime. His attitude on this point remained always consistent. Throughout his life he adhered to a youthful definition of equality, whereby the king should “protect equally all the orders of the state, [and] distribute his favors indifferently, and . . . make certain not to elevate one alone to the prejudice of others.”²⁶ Scion of a family of humble origins that had risen to the nobility through public service, Maistre looked approvingly on inclusive societies that protected liberty and equality (see chapter 1) and in which access to political office was open to all who aspired to acquire it through merit. He was undedicated to the reproduction of political pasts. And because he thought that Catholicism could sustain good government at all times and in all nations, he felt no need to defend any historically specific social or political system—least of all the Old Regime Gallicanism that drove him to rage. Imperial conquest was likewise something he had no desire to perpetuate, well aware, as a subject of the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, where he and his fellow Savoyards felt bullied by the Turinese, that “the worst misfortune for a nation, is to obey another.”²⁷ Even his attitude toward the Ultras was, for all his desperation at the publication of the Charter of 1814—the royal constitution whose mere existence paid tribute to revolutionary ideals—and for all the passion he spent defending the restitution of émigré property,²⁸ in the end a distant one.²⁹ His historical thought enabled this. For, despite his authoritarian reputation, Maistre was never an inflexible ideologist. Sensitive to the fluctuations of time, his points of view changed according to needs and circumstances that he saw as ordained by God. Maistre’s historicism, in fact, shows that his image in the French- and English-speaking worlds, where

24. Ibid., 364n.

25. With Camcastle’s *More Moderate Side of Joseph de Maistre*.

26. Maistre, *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III, duc de Savoie, roi de Sardaigne, de Chipre et de Jérusalem, prince de Piémont, etc.* (Chambéry, 1775), 33.

27. OC, 14:257.

28. OC, 13:100–103.

29. See Maistre, *Correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre, 1811–1817*, ed. Albert Blanc (Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1860), 1:268.

he has been known respectively as an absolutist and as a precursor of fascism, needs to be radically changed. For Maistre not only crafted a new, distinctively French way of thinking about history that placed enormous faith in the power of human beings to craft their own destiny. He did so by emphasizing the themes of liberty and the individual in a manner inconsistent with both fascism and absolutism.

Maistre's conservatism, then, did not assist a desire to congeal the past, and this makes his long-ignored moral progressivism comprehensible. Nor is studying his historical thought an antiquarian venture. It enables, first, a wholesale reassessment of his overall philosophy. It illuminates, second, the statistical practices of the administrators of the Directory and the Empire, and the assumptions about the course of history that underlay those practices. And it prompts, third, a reconsideration of the intellectual background, socio-moral goals, and antipolitical sensibilities of the socialists, traditionalists, and positivists who took it up during the 1820s and 1830s. To be sure, liberals like François Guizot (1787–1874) and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) also read Maistre. But unlike the main characters of this book, they never regarded history either as a way out of politics or as a comprehensive means of philosophical explanation.

III

This book draws an intellectual profile of Maistre that differs variously from that often sketched by current scholarship. I maintain that Maistre was a rationalist, and not the die-hard enemy of reason that is often portrayed; that his epistemology comprised an original empiricism continually in tension with the innatism that is invariably assumed of him; that, like the monarchists of the Restoration, he prized freedom highly;³⁰ that he was very far from being the pure and crude authoritarian and absolutist so long and so often accused; that in the end his monarchism and general commitment to temporal sovereignty were shaky and ambiguous at best; and that his political attitudes were not reducible to a negation of Revolution, but derived from his inheritance and engagement with various strands of the Enlightenment.

Maistre never had sufficient spite for the a priori, system-building, and mathematizing reason that the *Encyclopédie* elevated to infallible heights. It has therefore been frequently presumed that he was an irrationalist—a claim

30. On monarchist liberalism during the Restoration, see Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society? Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

seemingly supported by the fact that he proposed intuition and common sense as epistemological alternatives to reason.³¹ I argue, however, that intuition and common sense—themselves notions with deep roots in theological rationalism—collapsed in his thought onto a new, collectivist, a posteriori kind of reason, ideally suited to historical thinking (see chapter 2), that had deep Cartesian roots—and that Félicité Robert de Lamennais (1782–1854) ultimately radicalized with his notion of common sense (see chapter 6).

Intuition and common sense, in turn, were the faculties of an *empirical* mind attentive to particulars. That this has not been discerned previously is partly attributable to the fact that Maistre advertised his innatism loudly, defending Descartes' inborn ideas and the natural law of Pierre Charron (1541–1603) engraved in the heart by God, against Enlightenment materialism. Nor has Maistre's ferocious attack on Bacon's empiricism in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* (published 1832) done much to rectify the widespread impression that he was an unmovable enemy of experience. I maintain, however, that Maistre attacked certain strands of the Enlightenment by developing the form of direct empiricism (see chapter 2) that is necessarily implied by using historical evidence, as he did, to make political points. Empiricism, in addition, certified Maistre as Burke's intellectual partner. Indeed, the two thinkers' joint defense of religion with experience persuaded scholars (wrongly) for some time that Burke had been Maistre's intellectual mentor.³²

Only lonely efforts have so far striven to prove that liberty was integral to Maistre's political thought.³³ This book seeks to assist in the plowing of this so far narrow furrow by contending that Maistre had strong ideas of personal and political freedom that were integral to his historical and political thought. Again, he himself did little to raise the profile of his theory of liberty. The *Considérations sur la France*, with its anguished portrayal of the revolutionaries as God's playthings, entrenched Maistre firmly in the public imagination as a historical determinist who equated Providence with fatality. Yet, although the *Considérations* famously states that “we are all attached to the throne of the Supreme Being”³⁴ by a chain, it says also that the chain is “supple,” and that it is variably so; and that the extent of suppleness corresponds to the degree of freedom with which Providence endows humanity

31. Pierre Glaudes, introduction to *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 354.

32. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 101–2.

33. Camcastle, *More Moderate Side of Joseph de Maistre*, and Paolo Pastori, “Joseph de Maistre e la libertà,” *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto* 55, 4 (1978): 336–58.

34. *Considérations sur la France*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 199.

during different historical periods. Revolution, of course, is the age when the chain tightens extremely, nearly immobilizing humanity. But this age is also the exception of history, and the shroud of the freedom that otherwise suffuses Maistrean history.

With time, Maistre's interest in freedom increased, and he abandoned the absolutist tradition of political thought with which French scholarship consistently associates him. *Du pape*, his ultramontanist manifesto, signaled the final antiabsolutist—and, in some respects, unmonarchical—orientation of his thought. The point may seem counterintuitive, since *Du pape*'s portrayal of a Europe ruled by monarchs hardly seems, at first glance, intended to diminish kingly power. Yet Maistre's conception of the papacy as a power of constitutional revision does precisely that. A rift hence separates the rather Bodinian texts he composed during 1794–96, from *Du pape* (1819).³⁵

This is no idle point. On it depends, first, the moral progress that Maistre insists is history's constant. Although humans often use their freedom badly, over time this freedom conspires with Providence to produce positive moral outcomes—thanks to human perfectibility, a doctrine that Maistre joins Rousseau in temporalizing. The suggestion that Maistre was a progressivist may unsettle readers who still see him mainly as a Christian pessimist for whom only Providence redeems. One purpose of this book is to ease such discomfort by reading closely Maistrean texts that reveal his Pelagianism—the very same that inspired his impassioned defense of the Jesuits, and that impelled him to hound Jansenists, Protestants, and other descendants of Augustine, while borrowing extensively from their thought.

Of all eighteenth-century philosophies, it was Rousseau's that Maistre scattered most liberally throughout his writings. Scholars have long underlined the continuity between Rousseau and Maistre,³⁶ and the formative influence that Rousseau exercised on Maistre.³⁷ In the shadow of Revolution, Maistre and his fellow conservatives reread the Genevan with new eyes, and to theoretical profit. But in the process of learning, Maistre denounced his teacher, as he unearthed in his works the critical armaments that had served to destroy an entire way of life. Indeed Maistre felt for Rousseau a unique combination of intense interest and passionate repugnance that makes sense

35. I am grateful to Jean-Yves Pranchère for helping me clarify this point.

36. Graeme Garrard, "Rousseau, Maistre and the Counter-Enlightenment," *History of Political Thought* 15 (1994): 97–120.

37. On the Rousseau-Maistre relationship, see also Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'autorité contre les lumières: La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 199–226; and Richard Lebrun, "Joseph de Maistre and Rousseau," *SVET* 88 (1972): 881–98 http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal_of_the_history_of_ideas/v068/68.1armenteros.html.

when considering the two thinkers' respective positions vis-à-vis religion and the Enlightenment.

By the time Rousseau began to publish, the theological and radical Enlightenment, once collaborative, had polarized and become inimical³⁸ so that, as Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan (1709–84) realized, the thought of the author of *The Social Contract* could play a mediating role, and fill the vacuum left by moderate forms of Christianity and philosophy.³⁹ In this respect, the Counter-Enlightenment Rousseau founded was a form of antiradical Enlightenment. Maistre thought well of it because it proved Christianity's worldly uses. Such proof was indispensable after 1750, when utility became the ultimate moral principle, and disbelief a "totalizing system" demanding answers to questions not of faith but of good living.⁴⁰ What Maistre found unendurable was Rousseau's belief that portions of Christianity would have to be discarded in the process of confronting *philosophie*.⁴¹

Maistre's approach to the absolutist and antidespotic Enlightenment represented by Montesquieu and Gibbon was far more muted.⁴² He reproached Montesquieu for his faithless determination to adopt God's point of view,⁴³ yet Montesquieu's relativism supported his own bid to know "the eternal laws of the world" and his transformation of historical study into spiritual solace. A similarly uneasy combination of blame and borrowing characterized his relationship to Hume, whom he deemed philosophically dangerous, but to whom he was also indebted, especially in the fields of history and epistemology (see chapter 2).

In contrast, Maistre rejected as the essence of *philosophie*, the Lockean empiricism whose unprecedentedly impious potential Peter Gay described in *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966). The *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*

38. See Jeffrey Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2010), especially the introduction.

39. See Hisayasu Nakagawa, "J.-J. Rousseau et J.-G. Pompignan: La 'Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard' et 'De la religion civile' critiqués par l'*Instruction pastorale*," in *Dix-huitième siècle* 34 (2002): 67–76; and Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, 306.

40. Bernard Plongeron, "Combats spirituels et réponses pastorales à l'incrédulité du siècle," in *Les défis de la modernité (1740–1840)*, ed. Bernard Plongeron, *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Desclée, 1997), 247.

41. On the Counter-Enlightenment's adoption of Helvétius's principle of utility, see Burson, *Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, 306–7.

42. For a more extensive account of Maistre's relationship to the various strands of Enlightenment, see Carolina Armenteros and Richard Lebrun, introduction to Armenteros and Lebrun, eds., *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 1–16.

43. Jean-Yves Pranchère, s.v. "Montesquieu," in Jean-Louis Darcel, Pierre Glaudes, and Jean-Yves Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 1230.

(begun in 1809), a study of the epistemology of Locke's precursor, is a work of detestation. Yet Maistre objected not so much to Locke as to the *philosophes'* image of Locke. After all, in the first decades of the eighteenth century the theological Enlightenment represented by the Jesuits and the *Journal de Trévoux* had synthesized Locke and Malebranche both piously and successfully. It was only during the 1730s, when Voltaire turned Locke into a materialist, and when, following his lead, the Jansenists started accusing the Jesuits of mobilizing the philosophy of a sensualist, that Locke lost his legitimacy in Catholic circles.⁴⁴ Ironically, then, the Locke that Maistre cast off was his enemies' imaginary construct.⁴⁵

But Maistre's admiration for Descartes was unbounded. Descartes was his hero of reason. He was the bulwark against justification by faith alone, that mantra of the Augustinians from Calvin to Pascal, those producers of disorder who had manufactured all modern horrors. Descartes had the further merit of having begotten Malebranche, who had remained pure throughout his marriage to Locke by the Jesuits, and whom Maistre adored for having shown that reason is the site where the divine presence manifests itself in humanity.⁴⁶

Maistre's religious conservatism derives from a form of Enlightenment that, wishing to keep a seat for religion in politics and society, debated on the political liberties deriving from the relationship between church and state. Famously represented by Burke and often dependent on Hume's subjection of reason to the passions, this initially British Enlightenment proved, when transported to Germany with Hume, quite useful to Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), Salomon Maimon (1753–1800), and other critics of Kant in their subversion of criticisms of Christianity.⁴⁷ This book demonstrates that Maistrian conservatism and epistemology arose out of Hume's similar and little-known fate in France.

IV

Maistre's posterity in the French nineteenth century can appear surprising. The monarchists of the Restoration whose causes he pleaded rarely turned to his writings for reflection, or even for propaganda. The conservative press that

44. Burson, *Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, 44–53.

45. The *philosophes'* image of Locke was so solid and well-known that it was demolished only in 1969, when John Dunn published *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises on Government."*

46. Pranchère, "Ordre de la raison, déraison de l'histoire," 382.

47. Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1–13, 24, 91, 137, and 288.

took up his ideas simply reproduced them, or the lively style in which he expressed them, without reflecting much on the philosophy that underlay them. *Le conservateur* features articles by Lamennais⁴⁸ and Bonald⁴⁹ largely content to express a few opinions, either similar to Maistre's or simply his, when addressing contemporary issues and events. Anticipating Sainte-Beuve's depiction of Maistre as a stylist rather than as a thinker, an article by Arthur O'Mahoni on the Louvre's paintings makes rhetorical use of italics and irony in a manner quite reminiscent of Maistre,⁵⁰ but ignores his thought and politics. The one departure from these patterns is an anonymous article, "Sur le principe politique," in the far more theoretical—and, perhaps for that reason, soon-to-be-suppressed—last volume of *Le conservateur*,⁵¹ that adopts concepts integral to Maistrian historical thought—the comparability of moral and physical laws,⁵² the idea that history proceeds by the "force of things,"⁵³ that the political principle is expressed in the history of each people⁵⁴—and applies them to analyze recent French political history. But this was an exception in a political movement that followed Maistre in valuing—unfortunately for the conservative posterity of his thought—practice over theory, and whose presence in print was already too precarious to borrow theories that had first been developed by the precursors of Revolution. Unlike many of Maistre's contemporary admirers, the Ultras and legitimists had a political status to preserve; and leaving Maistre's thought untapped was one price they paid to achieve this. The praise of Maistre's style was hence their major means of celebrating him. Even Jacques-Maximilien Benjamin Bins de Saint-Victor (1772–1858), one of their most brilliant and renowned journalists, limited his comments to the subject when writing a piece as germane to Maistrian theory as the preface to the first edition of *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*.⁵⁵ In a similar vein, only one directly polemical use seems to have been made of Maistre by an Ultra—O'Mahoni's comparison of Maistre to an Old Testament prophet who defeated, together with Bonald and Lamennais, the "false wisdom" of the Gallicans.⁵⁶

48. On Bible societies (*Le conservateur* 3:49–54) and on France's relations with the Holy See (*Le conservateur* 3:593–600).

49. On military costs (3:481–94).

50. 4:561–66.

51. *Ibid.*, 4:3–15.

52. *Ibid.*, 4:4.

53. *Ibid.*, 4:4, 13.

54. *Ibid.*, 4:6.

55. Saint-Victor, preface to *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 447–54.

56. Quoted in E. N., "Préface de l'éditeur," in A. Baston, *Réclamations pour l'église de France et pour la vérité, contre l'ouvrage de M. le Cte de Maistre intitulé "Du pape," et contre sa suite, ayant pour titre, "De l'église gallicane dans son rapport avec le souverain pontife"* (Paris, 1821), 1:vi.

What made the Ultras generally wary of Maistre was precisely what inspired the zeal of one who would leave their ranks years later—Lamennais. The young Breton was fascinated by the new, worldly means that the Savoyard provided for defending old, sacred truths. Such means, he wrote to Maistre, were imperatively needed: some people were losing their faith because truth was articulated in medieval formats incomprehensible to modern minds.⁵⁷ In keeping with this observation, Lamennais replicated Maistre's historical perspectives on truth, and historical means of expressing the truth, throughout his tempestuous career. He is therefore a major character in part 2 of this book.

One curiosity of Maistre's intellectual descent in the nineteenth century is that his nontraditionalist interpreters were overwhelmingly disciples of Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). Although one might expect the herald of tradition and the father of industrial socialism to differ on nearly everything, their historical theories reflect and anticipate each other with startling exactitude. Both saw history as alternating between “synthetic” and “analytical” or “organic” and “critical” periods, as Saint-Simon variously called them. Both thought that Christian history was distinguished by the separation and epic struggle between spiritual and temporal powers. Both interpreted the Middle Ages as a period of social integration, and modernity as an age of disorder that began with Protestantism and culminated in the French Revolution. Both saw religion as indispensable to social stability, and believed that Christianity was the most perfect of religions. Last, and perhaps most important, both looked forward to the rejuvenation of religion—Saint-Simon's New Christianity and the “third revelation” of *Les soirées*. That Maistre prospered among Saint-Simon's descendants therefore has its logic. The way in which he depoliticized, and by the same stroke moralized, historical theory appealed to those who, politically disempowered and unworried by political strategy, presumed no necessary correspondences between philosophy and politics—at least not in the manner of the “schools” of political ideology that emerged during the Restoration.⁵⁸

Maistre seems to have been unaware of Saint-Simon. He did not own his works and mentions him nowhere in his notebooks and published writings. The obverse is less probable. Saint-Simon was keenly interested in early conservatism. The *Considérations sur la France* (1797), which contained all of Maistre's historical thought *in potentia* and was published before Saint-

57. Pranchère, *L'autorité contre les lumières*, 108.

58. On these schools, see Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration*, 342.

Simon's own works, may have been an influence. The similarities between Maistre's *Du pape* (1819) and Saint-Simon's *Le nouveau christianisme* (1825) also seem too great to be accidental. They spring, however, from a mixture of borrowing and coincidence. Saint-Simon's *Lettres d'un habitant de Genève à ses contemporains* (1803) and his *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (1814) both refigure themes of *Du pape*.

By the 1830s, Maistrian and Saint-Simonian ideas about history had fused so thoroughly among traditionalists, socialists, and positivists that their precise origins cannot always be identified. What is certain is that Maistre thrived among all these disparate schools of thought because he turned history into the site of moral renewal and evoked an earthly heaven of solidarity and peace. After 1848, however, the fortunes of his historical thought waned along with those of its socialist propagators. Nevertheless, this book continues until 1854 because it was in that year that Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802–61) delivered his *Discours sur la loi de l'histoire*, perhaps the last Christian philosophy of history of distant Maistrian descent to have been elaborated in nineteenth-century France; and that Auguste Comte (1798–1857) published the last volume of his *Système de politique positive*, a book that enshrined Maistrian themes in a historical philosophy. Comte was out of step with his time: when his rivals the Saint-Simonians were ablaze with religious prophecies in the 1830s, he shunned them as intellectually inferior madmen; but once 1848 was over, he turned religious himself.⁵⁹ The delay, however, resulted in the development of an exceptionally fertile and systematic historical theory.⁶⁰

V

This book is divided into two parts. Part 1 describes Maistre's historical thought in intellectual context and identifies the highly differentiated strands—social, moral, political, epistemological, religious, mystical, constitutional, Europeanist—that together form it as a whole. Part 2 then recounts the legacy of Maistrian historical thought in the three major forms in which it influenced the nineteenth century—as a collection of propositions on the nature of historical knowledge; as an etiology of the historical process, especially in regard to knowledge and violence; and as a speculative philosophy of history, that is, a model of the social, political, and religious systems that

59. Mary Pickering, "Auguste Comte and the Saint-Simonians," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1993): 236.

60. For the contrary case, see Pierre Macherey, "Le positivisme entre la révolution et la contre-révolution: Maistre et Comte," *Revue de synthèse* 112 (1991): 41–47.

have succeeded each other through time and will determine the character of the end of time. To make the evidence manageable, I have not dwelled on historiography partly indebted to Maistre—like Chateaubriand's *Études historiques*⁶¹—or on fictional and aesthetic materials that took up Maistrian historical themes but without reworking them for historical theoretical purposes—like the manifold reflections on suffering of Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aureville (1808–89) and Charles Baudelaire (1821–67).

The connection between Maistre and his historical philosophical heirs is sometimes indirect and not always clear, both because nineteenth-century authors did not always indicate their sources with scruple, and because the traditionalism he professed lent itself easily to intellectual borrowing without acknowledgment. As Christ's humble warriors, traditionalists were not supposed to wish to gain fame, which sometimes makes it difficult or impossible to identify which ideas Maistre's successors drew from him and which they took from the vast trove of traditionalism that he helped found. Regardless of the precise mode of transmission, however, my main argument that Maistre was at the origin of a distinctively Francophone way of thinking about history remains unaltered. In part 2, I have underlined his direct and indirect influence on nineteenth-century writers wherever I have been able to verify it, which is in almost all cases. Otherwise, I have assumed convergence.

Chapter 1 describes the genesis of Maistrian historical thought in *De l'état de nature* and *De la souveraineté du peuple* (composed 1794–96), two essays that refute Rousseau, and that contain most of Maistre's historical thought *in potentia*. The essays include a sophisticated model of historical causation that constitutes an early example of moral statistical theory.

Chapter 2 analyzes the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* (begun 1809), Maistre's major epistemological work, along with his pedagogical writings. It argues that Maistre's philosophy of knowledge was inherently historicizing and maintains, against current literature, that he was a direct empiricist, a theorist of freedom, and a sociologist of knowledge. The chapter also shows the consonance between Maistre's epistemology and the educational pieces that he composed for the Russian government.

Chapter 3 reads *Du pape* (1819) as a Europeanist text and an early exercise in the sociology of religion. It situates Maistre's magnum opus for the first

61. Chateaubriand distinguished his approach to the history of Christianity from Maistre's and Lamennais', possibly unaware that his belief that "liberty is Christian," and his expectation of a third revelation and of a man of "superior genius" were themes that Maistre had been the first to introduce and popularize in French historical consciousness. See *Oeuvres de Chateaubriand* (20 vols. Paris: Dufour, Moulat and Boulanger, 1860–63), 9:47–48; and Bernard Plongeron, "Le christianisme comme messianisme social," in *Les défis de la modernité*, 843–45.

time in the context of early nineteenth-century Russian religious controversies and reads it as the container of his speculative philosophy of history. The crucial event in this narrative is the advent of Christianity, the religion that instituted the sociopolitical order that made Europe free.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* (composed 1809). It depicts the little text as a theory of progress through suffering that lent a historical dimension to the mysticism of Origen (ca. 185–254), to modern Augustinianism, and to eighteenth-century illuminism, especially that of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803).

Chapter 5 discusses the Platonic, Pelagian, and utopian historical vision of *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821) in intellectual context. Maistre's account of the will and of the individual's role in history is clearest here, with prayer and prophecy arising as constitutive and determinative of the historical fate of social groups. *Les soirées* also contains a radical theory of liberty that this chapter breaks new ground by defining, and a vision of the end of time that would become highly influential.

Each of the chapters of part 2 is a continuation of a chapter or set of chapters of part 1. I have designed chapter 6 as the continuation of chapters 1, 2, and 3. It recounts how the *Considérations sur la France*, the pamphlet that popularized the tenets of the essays on Rousseau, became a major source of the moral statistics that became the glory of Napoleon's government, informing French prefects' plans to steer France toward a better future. Maistre's epistemological theory of historical causation also helped inaugurate the intellectual history of the social fact, as well as sociological approaches to the organization of knowledge, erudite Catholic philosophies of history, and traditionalist theories of liberty.

Chapter 7, the epilogue to chapter 4, discusses the astounding success of Maistre's theory of sacrifice among traditionalists, socialists, and positivists, and its contribution to expiatory historical philosophy until 1848.

Chapter 8, devoted to the speculative philosophy of history, picks up various themes of chapter 5. New characters are introduced, and the protagonists of chapter 7 return, but with an interest in the religious future and in the succession of historical ages. I argue that Maistre's vision of the coming harmony helped more than any other theme to guarantee his historical theoretical posterity, shaping the pre-1848 drive to guide history toward the abandonment of politics.

Finally, the conclusion describes the paradoxes at the core of Maistrian thought, with the aim of gathering together the various strands of his historical philosophy and tracing its prosperity and wane in the nineteenth century.

A Brief Intellectual Biography

One of Maistre's greatest contradictions was that, for the prolific writer that he was, he condemned writing as the corrupt communicator of a feeble and deadened truth, deeming the *spoken* word to be most alive and closest to God's infallible pronouncements.¹ Maistre was hence a conversationalist before he was an author; and in fact several of his texts were initially intended only as primers for conversation among friends. Conversely, if he transmitted his idea of history orally, the idea reached him also in unwritten ways. These ways were those of history itself, as well as his upbringing and education, social contexts and exchanges, personal and political events. Not all of this book, therefore, reflects on written texts. This brief biography attempts to retrieve Maistre's *non verba* by drawing as much as possible on the private sources of his thought: his diaries, notebooks, and correspondence.

Born in Chambéry in 1753, Joseph de Maistre was educated like most upper-class, French-speaking Catholic boys of his time—by the clergy (likely the Jesuits), receiving a thorough grounding in the Greek and Latin classics. As a boy he probably attended the *collège royal* in Chambéry, a traditional

1. Benjamin Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: The Paradox of the Writer," in *New enfant du siècle*, 75–98.

institution where lessons emphasized literary exercises—apologues (didactic moral tales), discourses, and disputations.² At home Maistre was, as he himself put it, “brought up in all the ancient severity, broken since the cradle in serious studies.”³ His grandfather Demotz, an *érudit* whose library was one of the finest in Savoie, took great interest in Joseph’s education: he had the young man’s tutor bring him twice a day to his study to check on his progress, and bequeathed his library to him when he died.⁴ From the age of seven Joseph was also a member of the Congregation of Notre-Dame de l’Assomption, a Jesuit-run society rather Jansenist in its insistence on human iniquity and its pedagogical reliance on the instillment of terror.⁵ On the whole, a stern consciousness of duty and religion pervaded the child Joseph’s upbringing: one anecdote recounts how, one day when he was nine, his mother asked him to stop playing on announcing to him the expulsion of the Jesuits from France.⁶ Yet not all was dourness and austerity: Joseph was also early imbued with the gentle, love-based mysticism of Saint Francis de Sales (1567–1622), so popular in Savoie at the time. He would return to it periodically throughout his life, both for spiritual consolation and for intellectual stimulation in his work.

At sixteen, Joseph enrolled in the law course at the University of Turin, where the works of Enlightenment philosophy were required reading; but his familiarity with them dated from earlier days. By fifteen he had already read Voltaire, and was harboring encyclopedic ambitions. He began work on a personal dictionary of the arts and sciences that evinced both his classical education and his enthusiasm for his times. Highly erudite and scrupulously researched, the entries show sympathy for sensationalist philosophy. Young Maistre read Polignac’s account of a statue that came to life very much like Condillac’s with an open mind,⁷ and judged Mirabeau’s *L’ami des hommes* (1756–58) a “temple built to virtue,” “one of those rare books that render homage to the human mind.”⁸ These early penchants help explain the empiricism that I claim he upheld. Simultaneously, Joseph sought persistently to reconcile these interests with his faith and education. Thus if he defined happiness with the Epicureans as “the presence of pleasure, and the absence

2. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 112.

3. OC, 14:208.

4. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 7.

5. Ibid., 14–15.

6. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 71.

7. Maistre, *Extraits F*, Chambéry, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J15, 458.

8. Ibid., 137.

of pain,” he concluded from this that the “belief in immortality is the only sanction for morality,” jotting down his first reflections on the happiness of criminals and virtuous men⁹—the very debate that would open *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821) thirty-nine years later. Indeed, during his adolescence Maistre always framed his knowledge of sensualist psychology within a traditionalist yet unusual moral framework. He did so most memorably in the passage of his *Registres de lecture* where he argued for the embalmment of the corpses of good men on grounds that men remember nothing except what they receive through the senses, and that the remains of the virtuous, suitably preserved, could provide undying inspiration for future generations.¹⁰

But most remarkable about Maistre’s teenage reading notes is the continuity of interest and opinion they disclose with his mature works. At sixteen the future Jesuitist was already hinting at *Du pape’s* sociology of religion, arguing that the ecclesiastical state is good because it preserves society and prevents people from dying of hunger.¹¹ And at fifteen he had already judged that *Des délais de la justice divine*, the Plutarchian text that he would translate into French and publish in 1816, was “without question one [of the treatises] that does the greatest honor to Plutarch.”¹² Even as an adolescent Maistre was already an intuitionist, contending, as he would in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* (begun 1809), that the idea of abstraction has been engraved in our minds by God’s hand, and that no definition can compare with the evidence of inner sentiment.¹³ He had made his first steps in fideism, confessing to God that he adored him without understanding him.¹⁴ He had judged Pascal harshly;¹⁵ and he had speculated on the nature of time and the idea of successive eternities within eternity¹⁶—voiced years later by the senator of *Les soirées*.

On return from university, a budding career in Savoie’s legal establishment left Maistre little time for reading and writing on subjects unrelated to his work as a magistrate. Still, over the next twenty years he managed to enlarge his grandfather’s library into the best library in Savoie, encompassing virtually

9. Ibid., 45.

10. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 10, 17–20; and Maistre, *Extraits F*, 111, 297.

11. Maistre, *Extraits F*, 18.

12. Ibid., 81.

13. Ibid., 141.

14. Ibid., 289.

15. Ibid., 285. See also Jean Rebotton, “Maistre’s Religious Education,” in Lebrun, *Maistre Studies*, 79.

16. Maistre, *Extraits F*, 285.

every subject—arts and sciences (including the esoteric and the occult), history, philosophy, law, and theology. History attracted him particularly during these years.¹⁷ He read on ancient, medieval, modern, and ecclesiastical history, deriving from these readings, with the help of then-current syncretism, an argumentative method that would serve him throughout his life—the proof of a religious or philosophical belief by its prevalence across time and nations. He also became quite a fan of periodicals, those engines of revolution, keeping himself informed of contemporary issues by reading journals and gazettes from all over Europe.¹⁸ In this way, he built the political consciousness and linguistic skills (six modern European languages in addition to Latin and Greek) that would inform his later Europeanism.

The major new intellectual influence Maistre came across during his prerevolutionary adulthood was illuminism. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), whom he met, to his delight, in 1787, was a favorite author.¹⁹ Freemasonry also became the focus of his social life and a main source of his historical and philosophical reflection. At first initiated into the Loge des Trois Mortiers at Chambéry in 1773, Maistre quickly became interested in the Rite Ecossais Rectifié (RER²⁰) that Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730–1824) had brought to Lyon. Formally affiliated with the Dresden-based, Scottish-rite order of the Stricte Observance Templière, the RER combined traditional Scottish Freemasonry with Martinist mysticism and taught the eschatological cosmogony of Willermoz's spiritual teacher, Martinès de Pasqually (1727–74). According to this cosmogony, God gave freedom to the spirits that emanated from him. But first Lucifer and then Adam fell into matter and were imprisoned in it. Man's spiritual task is henceforth to save himself and matter through Christ's help, spiritual exercise, and theurgical communication with angelic spirits. Intrigued by these teachings, Maistre joined the RER's Loge de la Sincérité at Chambéry in 1778 under the name "Josephus a Floribus"—the Latin name of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202), the Middle Ages' major historical theorist and a possible inspiration of the senator's vision of the "third revelation" in *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*.²¹

Illuminism offered Maistre a variety of intellectual attractions. The study of the occult sciences—astrology, alchemy, magic—seems to have been

17. See Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 39.

18. *Ibid.*, 37.

19. OC, 13:331–32.

20. Jean Rebotton, introduction to Maistre, *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, ed. Antoine Faivre and Jean Rebotton (Geneva: Slatkine, 1938), 2:24.

21. Jean-Yves Pranchère, s.v. "Joachim de Flore," *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1204–5.

among them, and indeed his self-teaching of Greek and interest in ancient Platonism and Hermetism date from this period. Maistre probably also felt an immediate theological affinity with the Masonic fideistic mysticism of inner illumination or divine intuition. But most important among his intellectual acquisitions from Freemasonry was the tendency to interpret nature through “signs.” Insofar as Freemasonry was a philosophy, it could be broadly defined as a science of sacred symbols whereby every detail of every being in the world can, if interpreted right, yield information about the divine. Though by no means uncritical of Freemasonic theosophy—whose historical claims he questioned in letters to Willermoz, and ultimately dismissed in the *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick* (1782)—Maistre did incorporate its method of induction by “signs” or symbols into his mystical and political thought.

Probably because of his many juridical and Masonic activities, Maistre interrupted the *Registres de lecture* for about a decade during his twenties and thirties, to take them up again only in exile. His personal letters indicate that the Revolution found him a hardworking paterfamilias and member of the Senate of Savoie sympathetic to revolutionary developments. In July of 1790 he even wrote to his sister Thérèse judging that their king’s ambassador had “shown rather little taste for not wishing to celebrate the feast of the fourteenth [of July].”²² Yet by January 1791, he was admitting to his friend Joseph Henri Costa de Beauregard (1752–1824) that his “aversion for everything done in France [was becoming] horror,” that philosophical “systems were . . . turning into passions,” and that all the “massacres, pillagings, fires” ordered by the National Assembly were nothing compared with the destruction of the public spirit and the vitiation of opinion that accompanied them.²³ His letters to Costa de Beauregard through 1791 and up to April 1792 reveal a darkening mood: talk of revolutionary conspiracies in Chambéry, increasing aristocratic mistrust of the bourgeoisie and the populace, antireligious disturbances—all these contributed to Maistre’s wholesale rejection of French revolutionary ideals, and an attitude toward revolutions far more negative than that which he had voiced in 1785 when, praising the *Administration des finances de France* (1784) of Jacques Necker (1732–1804), he had advocated the careful uprooting of old institutions when necessary.²⁴ In the course of 1792 Maistre’s revulsion for the revolutionary regime finally grew beyond compromise. When the French army invaded the country in September, he

22. OC, 9:10.

23. Ibid., 9:11–14.

24. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 120–21.

was the only one of Savoie's senators who fled, abandoning the entirety of his property to be confiscated by the revolutionary regime. For the next three years, he settled in Lausanne, and for the next twenty-five, he lived in exile.

Lausanne for Maistre was the beginning of political polemics, philosophical refutation, and a new career as a pamphleteer that culminated in the classic *Considérations sur la France*. While in Chambéry, and with the exception of the *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick*, Maistre had composed mostly edifying and moralistic tracts for special occasions, notably the youthful, beautiful *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III* (1775) and the *Discours sur le caractère extérieur du magistrat* (1784). In the first, Maistre adopted the tone of a faithful son and subject who celebrates with joy and gratitude the virtues and achievements of his king-father. In the second, he urged his fellow magistrates to maintain "that imposing character that certifies the virtues of the public man, and captures universal trust."²⁵ For if the first duty of a magistrate is to be just, the second is to appear so, so that justice might come out of "the dark cloud in which she envelops herself, and render her oracles."²⁶

Consistent with the style and content of these compositions, the writings Maistre destined for the public throughout his life seem controlled and designed to enlighten, especially when compared with the more effusive correspondence. As Maistre explained to Vignet des Étoles in 1793, he restrained carefully the content and tone of his publications, feeling that his duty to his fellows was to edify, illuminate, and encourage.²⁷ But such control is probably the major continuity between Maistre's published works before and after the Revolution, which otherwise differ considerably. His Swiss writings—like the *Adresse du maire de Montagnole à ses concitoyens* (1795), the *Discours du Citoyen Cherchemot* (1799), and the sardonic *Bienfaits de la révolution française* (composed 1795)—incorporate sharp satire, confirming Maistre as the counterrevolutionary heir of Voltaire and the stylistic partner of Rivarol. The *Lettres d'un royaliste savoisien à ses compatriotes* (composed 1793) are also often in this spirit.

Critique, irony, and invective helped to communicate and alleviate his anger at the loss of his whole world. But they also disclosed his realization that *philosophie* and its child the Revolution had triumphed through the power of derisive disparagement that the *philosophes* but above all Voltaire had so skillfully employed and propagated. Where a Savoyard noble and magistrate, trained to address the public in the language of justice and love of king

25. OC, 7:11.

26. Ibid., 7:10.

27. OC, 9:58.

and nation, would have debased himself merely by engaging in polemics, exiled Maistre intuited that revolutionary propaganda could be fought only with propaganda, and public opinion now won and mastered through laughter and refutation. This is one way in which Maistre may be deemed to have been an antirevolutionary, that is, one disposed to fight the Revolution with revolutionary means. In most other respects he was the counterrevolutionary he announced himself as being, that is, a supporter of the precise, “angelic” contrary of “Satanic” Revolution.²⁸

In Lausanne Maistre also dropped the links with Freemasonry he had forged when he was twenty. Suspected by his government of having acquired liberal and antimonarchical opinions among the Freemasons, he composed a memoir protesting the political innocence of his Freemasonic activities.²⁹ Thenceforth—and although sympathetic to the quietism of Madame Guyon,³⁰ in those days extremely popular in Francophone Switzerland—Maistre’s religious thought took a more orthodox turn. His professional future required it and his social entourage in Lausanne encouraged it. The émigré community there was greatly influenced by the many members of the refractory French clergy who had taken refuge in Switzerland,³¹ and Maistre felt their influence intensely. For years during his youth in Savoie he had visited the abbé Joseph Victor, his possible master, on a regular basis. When Victor died in 1791, leaving him his books and papers, Maistre felt his passing deeply, and commented in his journal: “Never will I replace such a friend.”³² In Lausanne, Maistre cultivated close relations with French abbés, befriending the abbés Dutoit-Membrini³³ and Vuarin, and taking the abbé Noiton as his secretary.³⁴ Their company must have left its mark. Suggestively, it was during 1793–96, in the clergy-led émigré milieu of Lausanne, that Maistre elaborated his Providentialism, identified Gallicanism, Jansenism, and Protestantism as the ancestors of Revolution, and began to reflect seriously on the role of France, the “church’s eldest daughter,” as

28. On Maistre’s concept of Counter-Revolution, see Compagnon, *Les antimodernes*, 28–29.

29. Maistre, “Mémoire sur la franc-maçonnerie adressé au baron Vignet des Etoles,” in *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, 123–39.

30. *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* refers to her seven times, either neutrally or positively.

31. François Descostes, *Joseph de Maistre pendant la révolution* (Tours: A. Mame et fils, 1895), 312; and François Vermale, *Joseph de Maistre, émigré* (Chambéry, 1927), 62–63.

32. Maistre, *Les carnets du comte Joseph de Maistre, livre journal 1790–1817*, ed. Xavier de Maistre (Grenoble: Joseph Allier; Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte; Paris: 1, place Saint-Sulpice, 1923), 5. See also Jean-Louis Darcel, “Maistre’s Libraries,” 8.

33. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 505n.

34. *Ibid.*, 166.

Europe's leading nation, the only one capable of palliating revolutionary ravages through internal change.³⁵

It was probably also in the late 1790s that Maistre started to look with unwavering favor upon the Jesuits. His "family spirit" had certainly long encouraged this. As he wrote in 1816: "My grandfather liked the Jesuits, my father liked them, my sublime mother liked them, I like them, my son likes them, his son will like them."³⁶ Yet at nineteen, Maistre had seemed equally ill disposed toward Jansenists and Jesuits, calling the former "vile extravagants" whose works had been overrated and judging that the latter, "all-powerful," had "used their authority very badly" in Pascal's time.³⁷ Jean Rebotton has also found a twenty-one-year-old Maistre subscribing to Paolo Sarpi's anti-Jesuitism, probably under the influence of fellow Gallican magistrates. A rather Gallican desire to keep parliaments independent of the monarchy likewise seems to have inspired Maistre to defend venal posts, like Montesquieu, on the eve of the Revolution.³⁸

Maistre's intellectual exchange with émigré clergy continued long after he left Lausanne. In 1799, having fled to Venice to escape Napoleon's army, he had long conversations with the abbés Maury and La Chapelle. With the former he discussed the French character, the Académie française, and the utility of languages and libraries;³⁹ the latter he consulted on the church's temporal government.⁴⁰ The habit of intellectual dialogue with expatriated clergy became lifelong. Renewed in Saint Petersburg, it acquired political dimensions there, becoming a defining feature of Maistre's relations with the Russian government, and providing finally a reason for the end of his diplomatic mission. Symbolically, one of Maistre's last compositions on his deathbed was a memoir for the establishment of the Jesuits in Savoie.⁴¹

In September of 1799, after three years of private life and wanderings around northern Italy, Maistre was appointed regent of Sardinia. For the most part his time there was intellectually sterile, filled with administrative work and marred by his conflictive relationship with Viceroy Charles Felix of Sar-

35. Maistre, "Trois fragments sur la France," in *Joseph de Maistre: Écrits sur la révolution*, ed. Jean-Louis Darcel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 71–76.

36. OC, 13:426.

37. Maistre, "1813," *Extraits F*, Chambéry, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J15, 265–66.

38. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 126.

39. OC, 7:501.

40. See Maistre's notes on this exchange in *Religion E*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J21, 347–56.

41. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 367n.

dinia (1765–1831). The Sardinians, of whom he sketched a caustic portrait years later in Saint Petersburg,⁴² were also hardly to his liking as a people. Nevertheless he appears to have found happiness in family life⁴³ and even time for intellectual distraction, taking Hebrew lessons from a Lithuanian professor of Oriental languages at the University of Cagliari.⁴⁴ In a desolate setting like Sardinia's the study of ancient and Eastern languages seemed appropriately unworldly: the *Registres de lecture*'s few entries dated from Cagliari (1802) are on Dupuy's monograph on Hebrew,⁴⁵ and on Bianconi's book on the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.⁴⁶ It was Maistre's first personal Oriental renaissance, and it would have a Russian sequel.

Maistre's disputes with the viceroy meanwhile recurred. Charles-Felix begged the king to give Maistre some commission far away.⁴⁷ His request was finally granted in September of 1802, when Maistre was designated extraordinary Sardinian envoy to Saint Petersburg. He would be henceforth responsible for negotiating the subsidy that King Victor-Emmanuel I (1759–1824) received from Czar Alexander I. Maistre departed Cagliari in February 1803, visited some cities in Italy during his journey,⁴⁸ and, having left his family behind for financial reasons, arrived in the Russian capital in May.

Maistre's period in Saint Petersburg was the most intellectually productive of his life. It was there that he had the leisure, the social position, and the intellectual freedom to write and reflect abundantly on new, original subjects suggested by the Russian political and intellectual context. In Russia he could also refresh his interest in illuminism—this time the German variety represented by the then-popular Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740–1817)—without political worries. Illuminism now also inspired him in new ways. The reflections on religious history that he wrote in Russia, like the *Lettre au comte Potocki sur la chronologie biblique*, and the letter to Sergei Uvarov (1786–1855) on the mysteries of the ancients (both composed in 1810), were exegetical and speculative works far removed from the practically minded *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick*. Eventually, Maistre developed a mysticism of his own, which he exposed in the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* (1821)

42. OC, 9:410–11.

43. Ibid., 9:103–4.

44. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 188.

45. Maistre, "Langue hébraïque," in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J14, 1–14

46. Maistre, "De antiquis letteris habraeorum et graecorum," in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J14, 1–11.

47. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 191.

48. Maistre, *Les carnets du comte Joseph de Maistre*, 151–58.

and *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821), the subjects of chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

It was during this period that Maistre's political thought unfolded. The vicissitudes of the Napoleonic wars and problems with his court⁴⁹ convinced him that personal relationships were of ever lesser importance in political life. Associated with this perception was an increasingly deterministic view of politics: besides the hand of Providence, director of history, Maistre's correspondence from Saint Petersburg mentions the "sect," illuminist and philosophical, that seeks, whether consciously or not, to overthrow sovereignty by persuading kings that religion is rebellious.⁵⁰ In the wake of the rise and fall from power of the Kantian Mikhail Speranskii (1772–1839) in 1811–12, Maistre became convinced that, having destroyed Europe, the "sect" now plotted to take over Russia. In 1801 he had refuted this thesis, critiquing the *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme* (1797–99) of the abbé Augustin Barruel (1741–1820).⁵¹ But the new receptiveness of monarchs and emperors—the pope included—to revolutionary ideals now resolved him to adopt it. Viewing Napoleon as the incarnation of Revolution, and despairing of the temporary capitulation of Pius VIII (1761–1830) to his terms, he wrote in one of his rare antipapal comments: "Observe the horrible power of that *Antichrist*: in killing, he always debases. The Apostolic House is allied with him for the extinction of order, of civilization, and of worship."⁵² These were dejected words, but they supported a rational perspective on politics. In his letters Maistre began to distinguish carefully between cabinets and governments on the one hand, and royal houses and sovereigns on the other, depicting the former as functioning through political interest, adapted to the spirit of the times and holding the reins of power in their hands; and the latter as existing politically only thanks to a royal instinct that was fast becoming obsolete in the new European order.⁵³ The Europeanist ultramontanistism of *Du pape* was the end result of this ever more rational vision of politics, whereby the best government, or that shown by history to ensure the greatest amount of happiness and power in the greatest variety of circumstances, is that most rationally divine and therefore least subject to human fallibility.

49. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 178–80.

50. See especially OC, 10:302; OC, 12:39–42, 126.

51. Maistre, "Notes manuscrites de Joseph de Maistre sur l'ouvrage de Barruel: Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme," *Sociétés secrètes*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J11, 8ff.

52. OC, 12:112.

53. Ibid., 12:117–21, 134, 152, 322.

Maistre was recalled from his diplomatic post in early 1817 and left Russia in the late spring. He spent the remaining four years of his life fulfilling new, largely honorary duties as Piedmont's regent of the Great Chancery, editing *Du pape* for publication, completing *Les soirées*, and making a family home near Turin. Despite a rather happy family life, his correspondence from 1817 onward is often filled with despondency and political disillusionment: "Disgust, defiance, discouragement have entered my heart," he wrote to his daughter Constance on arriving in Turin. "I am without passion, without desire, without inspiration, without hope." Some of these feelings may be due to the fact that the Sardinian court was as wary of him as ever, and after his return confined him to the sidelines as much as possible: "I do not see, . . . since I am here, any light in the distance, any sign of favor."⁵⁴ The course of the Restoration and especially the publication of the Charter of 1814 also disappointed him considerably. With time, he interpreted the new royal order as yet another phase of the Revolution.⁵⁵ "It has vanquished us, and . . . we all resemble it more or less, in regard to political morality. The remedy advances, but it makes one blanch."⁵⁶ For Maistre, the Revolution was an epoch and not an event,⁵⁷ and it had endured beyond the Directory. Bonaparte picked it up and clasped it in his iron hand;⁵⁸ and when he let it go and it found itself hovering over a nondespotic king, it began to reign more tyrannically—because more silently—than ever.

Medical causes aside, one can attribute Maistre's death at the age of sixty-seven to the despondency that possessed him during his final years and that suffuses his last letters from Turin. Convinced that Providence had allowed the Revolution to win despite all the damage it had done, he had the misfortune of intuiting that even his own thoughts had become revolutionary. "My book will only do evil,"⁵⁹ he confided to Constance, writing to her in a downcast moment about *Du pape*—and rightly foreseeing the enormous interest the text would generate among the Left. Before dying, Maistre, horrified, understood that the Revolution had pervaded everything, that it had slipped even into the finest cracks of his own philosophy. He felt sick, and wrote: "I am dying with Europe, I am in good company."⁶⁰ His mood, in fact,

54. OC, 14:101.

55. Ibid., 14:147, 156.

56. OC, 13:62.

57. OC, 7:273.

58. Louis de Bonald, *Lettres à Joseph de Maistre*, ed. Michel Toda (Étampes: Clovis, 1997), 96.

59. Quoted by Jacques Lovie, "Constance de Maistre: Éléments pour une biographie," *REM* 4 (1978): 164.

60. OC, 14:183.

was so dark that Bonald wrote to him entreatingly to restore his spirits, assuring him that he himself would rather believe that the end of the world was at hand than that Europe was dying.⁶¹ In any event, Maistre rightly foretold his death. Toward the end of 1820 his health began to deteriorate. His description of his last disease is brief but suggests infection by a Guillain-Barré virus:⁶² “A bizarre humor to which many names are given has thrown itself on my legs and has deprived me of them. There is neither wound, nor pain, nor swelling, there is no fever, but in the end there are two legs fewer, and that is a lot for a biped.”⁶³ The paralysis was progressive and eventually reached the respiratory centers. Maistre died on February 26, 1821.

In all, his attitudes toward history evolved through his education, his exile and wanderings during the Revolution, and his years in Russia. One experience, however, influenced his idea of history more profoundly than any other—the denunciation of Rousseau that the Terror precipitated into writing.

61. Bonald, *Lettres à Joseph de Maistre*, 522.

62. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 341n.

63. OC, 14:254. See also Camille Latreille, “Les derniers jours de Joseph de Maistre racontés par sa fille,” *Quinzaine*, July 16, 1905, 149–61.

▣ PART ONE

Joseph de Maistre and the Idea of History, 1794–1820

CHAPTER 1

Joseph de Maistre against Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The Statistical Beginnings of Historical Thought, 1794–96

At the height of the Terror, with the Jacobins clamoring in Paris that they ruled on behalf of the people, Maistre became intensely preoccupied with the problem of popular sovereignty. Composing, from his exile in Lausanne, the *Lettres d'un royaliste savoisien à ses compatriotes*, he devoted the fifth letter to contending that popular sovereignty is inviable, especially among nations that are not city-states; and that, generally speaking, monarchy is the form of government best suited to the happiness of peoples. This letter was never published. The bishop of Sisteron, reviewing it, was of the opinion that Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) shone by his absence from it;¹ and Maistre, instantly embarrassed, expanded it into what would become his lengthy and never-finished treatise *De la souveraineté du peuple* (composed 1794–96), essentially a critique of *Du contrat social* (1762). Sometime between early 1794 and late 1795 but probably not long after Thermidor, Maistre also read Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755). This reading inspired *De l'état de nature*, a second essay on Rousseau.

In *De l'état de nature* and *De la souveraineté* the favorable comments on Rousseau—on the general will, on the critique of the morality of modern

1. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 52.

science, on the origins of society—spread through Maistre’s prerevolutionary notes² were replaced by a wholesale refutation of Rousseau’s philosophy that articulated most of Maistre’s mature thought *in potentia*. Maistre did not simply counter Rousseau point by point, as Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier (1718–90)³ and Jean-Louis Delolme (1740–1806)⁴ had done before him. He actually sketched the foundations of a philosophical system that was a rational negative of Rousseau’s own. The exercise was fruitful. Although not immediately published, the essays on Rousseau formed Maistre’s thought, providing the theoretical foundations of the *Considérations sur la France* (1797), which in turn contributed generously to the birth of moral statistics, to nineteenth-century constitutional theory, and to early conservative historical thought. Not that Maistre himself was aware of any intellectual innovation on his part: having abandoned the essays partly for financial reasons, he never returned to them or showed any interest in publishing them.⁵ Yet through his studies of Rousseau he came to owe much more to the Genevan philosopher than he would perhaps have liked to realize. “From Maistre’s opposition to Rousseau may be reckoned a kind of dependence.”⁶ It was in refuting Jean-Jacques that Maistre redefined nature as a mysterious divine agent and a source of reason; insisted that will and perfectibility are history’s main agents and society’s foundations; and developed the ideas on probability and moral conscience that were so important for his realist conservatism and his philosophy of history.

What I would like to explore in this chapter is not so much Maistre and Rousseau’s strange intellectual partnership, their sharing of a common, marginal space against many of the fundamental tenets of *philosophie*: that has been done before.⁷ Neither do I aim to study the psychological traits and philosophical attitudes and assumptions that united the two philosophers: that has also been explored.⁸ Nor, lastly, do I wish to describe the various

2. See *ibid.*, 131; Lebrun, “Joseph de Maistre and Rousseau”; and Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 95n.

3. In *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion, avec la réfutation des erreurs qui lui ont été opposées dans les différens siècles*, 12 vols. (Paris: Moutard, 1780).

4. In *La constitution de l’Angleterre; ou, État du gouvernement anglais comparé avec la forme républicaine et avec les autres monarchies de l’Europe* (Amsterdam: Van Harreveldt, 1771).

5. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 132.

6. Graeme Garrard, “Maistre, Judge of Jean-Jacques: An Examination of the Relationship between Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Joseph de Maistre and the French Enlightenment” (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1995), 97.

7. Garrard, “Maistre, Judge of Jean-Jacques,” and Garrard, “Rousseau, Maistre and the Counter-Enlightenment,” 97–120.

8. Lebrun, “Joseph de Maistre and Rousseau.”

Rousseauian personas that inhabited Maistre's thought.⁹ Rather, I am interested in tracing the seminal role that refuting Rousseau played in crystallizing a Maistrian mode of historical thinking that combined constitutional theory with statistical reasoning. *De l'état de nature* and *De la souveraineté du peuple* reveal how Maistre began, in 1794–97, to work out a political philosophy of history in which the French erudite tradition became a means to knowledge of the human; Tacitus and the early modern skeptics served as inspirations for a principle of historical creation and political durability; and—crucially—Rousseau turned into the starting point for a sort of primitive social statistics—a new means of second-guessing and rationalizing God's aims through time.

The essays on Rousseau also resolve, in the realm of political philosophy and for the first time since Vico, the conflict between will and reason inherent in Newtonian and Cartesian debates on natural history. Any understanding of Maistre's historical thought must therefore be preceded by an overview of the philosophical problem of origins as it emerged in the early modern era. In *Le monde* (1664), Descartes had presented his cosmology as a fable, hypothesizing that a godless world could have come into being through the sole functioning of natural laws. Against him Newton maintained, in the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687), that the mechanical laws that explain the universe as it is could not be used to investigate how it had originated. In his view, the Bible told the proper facts of the world's formation. Any attempt to explain those same facts mechanically would dissolve sacred narrative into theory to the detriment of Christianity, and leave the “wonderful uniformity in the Planetary System,” possible only as “the Effect of Choice,” unexplained.¹⁰ From then on, the battle lines were drawn between the pious voluntarists, heirs of Newton and Boyle, and those who advocated the atheistic mechanism of the Epicureans and Cartesians or the immanence of Leibniz and Spinoza. Historical theory, in other words, was divided among “those who did not and those who did distinguish between the first origin of things and the successive course of nature.”¹¹ The philosophical basis of the divergence was most carefully and memorably set forth in the Clarke–Leibniz correspondence of 1715–16.

With the early Enlightenment aspiration to apply Newtonian physics to all knowledge, the debate on origins spilled over into geology, theology, history,

9. Armenteros, “Maistre's Rousseaus,” in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, ed. Armenteros and Lebrun, 79–103.

10. Paolo Rossi, *Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 41–44.

11. *Ibid.*, 44.

natural philosophy, and linguistics; straddled the boundaries of art, science, and religion; and metamorphosed into a plethora of different arguments. Discussions on the development of politics often mingled with speculations on the history of the earth and nature. Historical philosophy developed in the process. Vico's *Principi di una scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazione* (1725)—which Maistre was one of the first non-Neapolitans to read¹²—replicated the Newtonian separation of origins from succession by sealing off profane and sacred history hermetically from one another. According to Vico, profane nations, guided by human processes, developed rationally, while sacred peoples were moved on their way by God's will. Considering holy history to be the only reliable source of information about the “obscure and fabulous ages” that had preceded the first histories of the Greeks and Romans,¹³ Vico enveloped origins, like Newton, in silence and sacredness. But philosophical history was born officially in an act of rebellion against Newton. The *Sorbonniques* (1750) of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–81) announced the liberation of the human from the natural sciences, a new mentality that no longer saw human history submitted to Newtonian mechanics; and that simultaneously proposed, in individual genius, the new means of conveying the principle of origins to the human realm, of pushing history divinely along in Newtonian fashion. Rousseau afterward extended the principle of origins that Turgot had conferred on extraordinary beings to all of humanity by recurring to the old Christian principle of perfectibility. It was part of his attempt to explain the origins of human degeneration, and therefore of history, with strictly human logic, and without recourse to the doctrine of original sin.¹⁴

It was at this point that Maistre, bent on using metaphysics to annul Rousseau's rebellious philosophy, stumbled, unsuspecting, into the debate on origins and succession.

Natural Law Dismissed, Justice Psychologized

De l'état de nature opens by observing that the question proposed by the Academy of Dijon, and which Rousseau answered in his second *Discours*—“What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?”—was badly formulated. This is because inequality is a social phenomenon, and has nothing to do with natural law. The proper question

12. Elio Gianturco, “Joseph de Maistre and Giambattista Vico: Italian Roots of De Maistre's Political Culture” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1937), vii.

13. Rossi, *Dark Abyss of Time*, 178.

14. Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 12.

should rather have been: “What is the origin of society? And is man social by nature?”

Maistre set himself the task of replying to this second, better formulated query that the Academy never asked. The problem was that Rousseau *had* addressed both social origins and natural sociability in both the second *Discours* and the “Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard” in book 4 of *Émile* (1762). Furthermore, his discussion of these ideas had had everything to do with major themes in the philosophy of natural law. The vicar’s reflections on the simultaneously natural, sociable, moral, and sentimental character of conscience leave no doubt on this point:

If, as it is not possible to doubt, man is sociable by nature, or at least made to become so, he cannot be so except by other innate sentiments, relative to his species; since considering only physical need, it must certainly disperse men, instead of bringing them together. Thus it is of the moral system formed by that double rapport to oneself and to one’s fellows that the impulse of conscience is born. To know the good is not to love it, man does not have the innate conscience of it; but as soon as his reason makes him know it, his conscience brings him to love it: it is that sentiment that is innate.¹⁵

Rousseau’s vicar may have carefully avoided the language of natural law and its connotations of rational control in explaining the birth of society out of conscience. Yet Rousseau’s natural sentiment is uncannily reminiscent of notions of natural right and law,¹⁶ some of them dating back to the sixteenth century. Maistre’s sentiment is, first, innate—like the natural norm that Domingo de Soto claimed was impressed in man’s mind to govern him according to reason.¹⁷ At the same time, it is separate from—if dependent on—reason, and in its impulsiveness more akin to will—as Pierre Charron defined it to be, writing about the good laws of the world as so many judgments against man, who pretends not to know what these laws are, though he holds their originals within him.¹⁸ Finally, Rousseau’s inner sentiments, inspiring in man love of self, fear of pain, desire of the good, and horror of death,¹⁹ are above all useful for protecting the individual. They are thus affined with the radical

15. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou, De l’éducation*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 4:600.

16. Berlin, *Against the Current*, 9, 15–16.

17. On Soto’s theology of natural rights, see Annabel S. Brett, *Liberty, Right and Nature: Individual Rights in Later Scholastic Thought*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 139–64.

18. Lebrun, “Maistre and Natural Law,” 202.

19. Rousseau, *Émile*, 436.

idea that Grotius took from the firebrand of Salamanca, Fernando Vázquez de Menchaca (1512–69): that natural right is a matter of individual self-preservation.²⁰ Rousseau nonetheless succeeded in detaching his notion of sentiment from natural law in appearance, and thereby rendering his moral psychology far more readily associable with the quietism so popular in his native Geneva, and in the writings of his *père spirituel*, Fénelon, than with the literature of Scholastic jurisprudence. Hence past interpretations of Rousseau as a philosopher whose thought is free from ideas of natural law.

Richard Lebrun believes such readings of Rousseau to be consistent with the gradual disappearance of references to natural law from Maistre's work and papers following the Revolution.²¹ Unusually, in critiquing Locke, Maistre describes natural law as inborn in human beings, indeed as identical with innate ideas,²² a notion that Lebrun traces to Maistre's reading of Charron's *De la sagesse* (1601), and that he explains as Maistre's attempt to distance himself from revolutionary discourse, which used the language of natural law to justify attacks on existing institutions.²³

These conclusions can be accepted. However Maistre did not so much inherit Rousseau's neglect of natural law, as he did Rousseau's *revision* of natural law. Charron influenced Maistre undeniably. But Maistre's attitude toward natural law mirrored also Rousseau's. Maistre did not simply share Rousseau's faith in the truth value of conscience.²⁴ He also used conscience to defend the natural sociability of man in a manner that replicates the Savoyard vicar's employment of the same idea. Indeed, Maistre attributed to conscience an inborn, instinctive, willful alignment with the good that simply restated, with slightly different emphases, the vicar's description of the workings of natural sentiment. The only difference was that, while for Rousseau the natural right expressed in sentiment is conscious and articulated by reason, for Maistre it is often unconscious, yet infallibly recognizable by the impulsive cry of conscience that self-interest or self-deceit can ignore but never stifle. A parable illustrates this:

The laws of justice and of the moral good are engraved in our souls in indelible characters, and the most abominable criminal invokes them every day. See these two robbers who wait for a traveler in the forest;

20. On Grotius's idea of self-preservation, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xvi. On Vázquez, see Brett, *Liberty, Right and Nature*, 165–204.

21. Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law," in Lebrun, ed., *Maistre Studies*, 193–206.

22. Ibid., 198.

23. Ibid., 204.

24. Lebrun, "Joseph de Maistre and Rousseau," 885.

they massacre him, they strip him: the one takes his watch, the other his box, but the box is adorned with diamonds: "IT IS NOT JUST!" cries out the first, "We must share equally." O divine conscience, your sacred voice does not cease to make itself heard: always it will make us blush for what we are, always it will warn us of what we can be.²⁵

Every man knows justice and the good viscerally, intuitively, without need of reason, even while he chooses to deceive himself. Where Maistre departs from Rousseau (and plunges into paradox) is in supposing that the divine instinct is not simply consonant with reason and the moral good it expresses, or that it requires the demonstration of reason in order to become active as Rousseau insists; but that divine conscience actually *is* reason. Rousseau's human individual is naturally sociable only by a feeling whose goodness reason confirms. But Maistre's is so also by a reason that harmonizes with this feeling to the point of identity. The Maistrian individual can be attracted to the good as a reasoned principle, but he can also bear unwilling witness to the rational law of justice. The thief who cries out for fairness does not simply acknowledge the good like Rousseau's vicar: he enunciates the "rule of conduct" that for the early moderns emanates from the legislator's will, governs relations between human beings, and constitutes at once law and reason.²⁶

On this point, Maistre remains faithful to Aristotle's natural law, from which Rousseau did successfully escape. He posits the Scholastic distinction between irrational beings, beings *moved* toward their ends, and rational beings, beings who *move themselves* toward their ends.²⁷ The Maistrian idea of conscience, always manifested *actively*—as in the thief's unwitting cry—and unique to humanity, depends on this distinction. Indeed, in the spectrum of natural law theory, Maistre drew closer to the Aristotelianism of Salamanca than to the more radical natural-rights currents that bred Rousseau's and presumed neither activity to be essential to conscience, nor any feature to distinguish the natural constitution of rational and irrational beings. The way both authors discuss natural reason makes this clear. The vicar's reason had been one of understanding: sentiment loved the good, and reason identified it. Maistre's reason is one of action that, more than mirror or apprehend nature's order, emanates out of nature and in so doing melds with a supraindividual will. In this respect, Maistre's natural right resembles most closely the *ius* of William of Ockham, central to a philosophy of agency, that links "subjective

25. Maistre, *Examen d'un écrit de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, in *OC*, 8:565.

26. On Maistre's concept of law, see Lebrun, "Maistre and Natural Law," 198.

27. Brett, *Liberty, Right and Nature*, 142.

natural right” to an “objectively rational order of nature . . . based on the Aristotelian categories of potency and action.”²⁸ Maistrian reason, in short, is astonishingly similar to will.

The central sociological problem for Maistre was hence not to know how reason affirms or expresses the precepts of a moral law; but rather, to know how reason realizes these precepts durably in a corrupt world. Rousseau’s transformation of subjective right into conscience or natural sentiment afforded a means to do this. It equated sentiment with a self-expanding reason harmonious—indeed identical—with the divine will. Like Rousseau, yet independently of him, Maistre abandoned natural law as a moral or legal absolute, refashioning it into a subjective agent that produced sociopolitical reality, and was identifiable with the moral good.

Nature Redefined: As Divine Producer of Chance

Transforming natural law into conscience presupposed redefining nature. Accordingly, *De l’état de nature* presents nature as a divine agent intrinsic to humanity that generates social and historical development. Maistre arrives at this definition via a philological survey of the different meanings that the word “nature” takes on in everyday use, and in modern and ancient texts.

The first, most general definition encountered by this method is that of nature as an ensemble of universal “moving forces,” where man cannot but see the “will of the great Being.” “It is in this sense,” Maistre says, “that a Greek father said that nature is simply divine action manifested in the universe.”²⁹ Regarding whether this divine agency is primary or secondary, that is, whether God is immanent or transcendent, the majority consensus inclines toward the second opinion. Ralph Cudworth (1617–88), for one, did not believe that God’s majesty would lower itself to intervening directly in, say, the generation of a fly. As an early modern thinker, he preferred to emphasize God’s goodness rather than his power. In his account God appointed, in nature, a force to carry out his commands. “Hence,” concludes Maistre, “those expressions so common in all languages: *nature wants, does not want, defends, loves, hates, cures*, etc.” When we say, for instance, that nature has healed a wound, we speak of a “force, a *power*, a *principle* and, to speak clearly, of a being that works at the conservation of our body and whose action has sufficed . . . to heal the wound.”³⁰ Taking sides definitively for immanence or

28. Ibid., 51.

29. OC, 7:522.

30. Ibid., 7:522–23.

transcendence was, however, unnecessary for Maistre's purposes. To relocate humanity in nature, it sufficed to functionalize nature as a set of social and historical principles that execute "the will of the infinite intelligence"; and to declare that these principles were nominally identical with the divine will, so that "in naming them one names it."³¹

In *De l'état de nature*, Maistre uses this concept of nature to counter Rousseau's appeal, in the *Discours*, to accident as an explanation of humanity's movement out of the state of nature. Even supposing that a presocial state could have existed—which Maistre considers impossible—it could only have been lived in, and left, by natural means. Rousseau attributed the end of the state of nature to two chance events: the first caused violence to reign, and the second brought civil society into being, on that infamous day when one man drew a circle on the ground and called the enclosed terrain his. Rousseau commented that, for the common utility, this should never have happened. Maistre explodes sarcastically at this: "The chance that SHOULD [not have happened]!!! Decidedly, it was quite wrong! Nature SHOULD HAVE stopped it to prevent it from happening." Against accident, Maistre posits nature as a regulator of chance events that, by virtue of its status as a divine agent, directs everything toward the good. The main theme of his *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821)—nature's administration of the temporal government of Providence—is thus already latent in *De l'état de nature*, down to the historical philosophical contradictions inherent in the notion of a willed world. Commenting on Rousseau's expression that man "was made" to stay forever in the state of nature, Maistre observes:

We say in everyday conversation: "This man was made for such a profession; what a pity he did not take it up!" Rousseau appropriates this expression and transports it into philosophical language. . . . So that here we have an intelligent being that was made (apparently by God) for the life of savages and that a dreadful chance precipitated into civilization (apparently in spite of God). This dreadful chance should really not have happened, or God should have been opposed; but nobody does his duty!³²

The paradox common to Providential historical models is apparent: God's will is constant and predetermining, since God is eternal; but insofar as God's will is a will, it is permissive, indeed productive of contingency. Maistre's solu-

31. Ibid., 7:524.

32. Ibid., 7:518n.

tion to the dilemma is to attribute historical development not, like Rousseau, to physical accident, but to the action of a moral law that operates through the mediation of nature. A notion of the generalized, rational, average quality of the natural, of what is “proper to man,” emerges from his refutation of Rousseau’s speculations on the birth of society and agriculture:

[Rousseau] sees two isolated savages who, walking each on their way, happen to meet and take a fancy to living together: he says they meet by chance. He sees a seed detached from a bush and falling on a soil disposed to fertilize it; he sees another savage who, observing the seed’s fall and the germination that follows it, receives in this way the first lesson in agriculture: he says that the grain has fallen by chance, that the savage has seen it by chance; and, as it is not necessary for this man to meet another, or for this seed to fall, he calls these events accidental cases that might not have happened. . . . Without examining whether one can say and to what extent one can say that what happens might not have happened, it is at least certain that the Creator’s general plans are invariable: consequently, if man is made for society, this savage may well not meet another; but in general savages will have to meet. . . . If agriculture is proper to man, it is quite possible for this seed not to fall on this ground; but it is impossible for agriculture not to be discovered in one way or another.³³

Describing the arrangement of accident into patterns consonant with human nature, this account recalls early ideas of social normality. By assuming the human propriety of certain general, invariable social events, Maistre reasons as Durkheim later would when he called repeated social phenomena normal. Maistre, in fact, is describing the transition from human nature to normality that accompanied the rise of statistics.³⁴ His Providence is the obverse of accident. It renders chance ordered and predictable, defining how human beings must behave in the normal order of things; but it coexists with the idea of human nature—which is itself becoming transformed, in tandem with the revision of the idea of nature. “Nature” in the Rousseauian sense—man alone, socially unconditioned and entirely according to God’s will—is becoming “nature” as divine agent that fashions humankind for society and predisposes it, collectively, for a number of states and events, all of them associated with the conditions of society and civilization. The senator of *Les soirées* enunciated the most violent of these events—war—which

33. Ibid., 7:552–53.

34. See Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

he called “divine” for minimizing social violence by spending blood on the battlefield,³⁵ and for being awfully mysterious. After all, what reasonable extraterrestrial could ever understand why humans honor soldiers, those killers of innocent men? The senator’s observations had been preceded by those of chapter 3 of the *Considérations sur la France*, which asserted that war is divine because it is regular, because the number of fatalities it produces across the centuries remains constant in relation to the overall population.

The patterned antics of the divine recall an eighteenth-century tradition of statistical thought, most popularly expressed by Johann Peter Süssmilch (1707–67). In his celebrated *Die göttliche Ordnung in den Veränderungen des menschlichen Geschlechts, aus der Geburt, dem Tode und der Fortpflanzung desselben erwiesen* (1765–76), this German priest read statistical regularities in both providential and quasi-physiocratic fashion as manifestations of an order external and superior to man.³⁶ Such works set the stage for the taming of chance by proposing that chance was subordinated to some underlying, deterministic order of happenings. Maistre’s critique of Rousseau does this too. Uniquely, though, it locates the source of order in a self-creative, self-determining human and moral nature. Recalling the thief’s conscience and the “forces” that almost a century later would underlie the sociology of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), this nature is itself good, “normal,” “general,” or average in the sense of “right,” like everything that God wills as “proper” to man—and which Burke too praised as the basis of a sound society.³⁷ The *Considérations sur la France* would popularize the idea of natural, determining moral forces, arguing that nations’ divine mission irresistibly guides the development of revolutions and constitutions, often reversing human intentions and surpassing human understanding, but invariably generating regular social patterns.

From Communing with the Past to Retrieving It: Fable as Probability and Poetry as Erudition

Rousseau introduces his second *Discours* by disclaiming its status as history, saying he has conjectured on the “sole nature of man and the beings that surround him, on what mankind could have become, had it been abandoned to itself.”³⁸ Rousseau’s aim in choosing such a dually secularist and

35. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 650–51.

36. Alain Desrosières, *La politique des grands nombres: Histoire de la raison statistique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993), 96.

37. Ian Harris, introduction to Edmund Burke, *Burke: Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Ian Harris, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xxviii.

38. OC, 7:529.

hypothesis-oriented approach was to dismiss the Bible and account for humanity with mere reason. Yet, ironically, and precisely because of this, the second *Discours*, the most Diderotian and least Christian of Rousseau's writings, is also the most sacred. It is, in Jean Starobinski's words,

a religious act of a particular sort, which substitutes itself for sacred history. Rousseau recomposes a philosophical *Genesis* where neither the garden of Eden, nor the Fall, nor the confusion of languages are lacking. It is a laicized, "demythified" version of the history of origins, but that, in supplanting the Scriptures, repeats them in another language. This language is that of conjectural reflection, and anything supernatural is absent from it.³⁹

Rousseau's recourse to hypothesis in the second *Discours* is explicable by the fact that its composition coincided with his own "reform," or project to improve his character, and with his repudiation of Catholicism and readmission into the Calvinist confession at Geneva. The *Discours*' speculative anthropology served to propound a version of human origins parallel to the Bible that yet did no damage to Calvinist scriptural literalism. Moreover, the idea of the state of nature enabled Rousseau to explain the human degeneration he emphasized so insistently without embracing the dogma of original sin whose denial had caused his break with the Catholic Church (and *Émile*'s condemnation by the archbishop of Paris).⁴⁰ A godless history-as-fable, a mythical quest for knowledge of the human, Rousseau's *Discours* was sacred and hermeneutically valuable regardless of whether it actually described historical reality. It was a means of union with a remote past that corresponded to humanity's innermost, uncorrupted self and was therefore, of itself, informative about human nature. This framework in turn proved useful for theorizing the operation of accidents and utility that Rousseau now proposed as historical mechanisms of corruption alternative to original sin. Thus the first appearance of violence among humans was a misfortune whose effects were exacerbated by expediency, as the stronger came to dominate the weaker, forcing them to provide resources.

As a Catholic who had had occasion to observe the effects of Rousseau's philosophy on Christianity, Maistre rejected such explanations for being amoral, ahistorical, and subversive of one of the church's fundamental dogmas. In *De l'état de nature*, however, he focuses his criticism not on the

39. Jean Starobinski, introduction to Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, ed. Jean Starobinski (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 19–20.

40. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 156.

neglect of the dogma of original sin but on the hypotheses that Rousseau devised to replace it. Maistre engages Rousseau on his own terms, objecting particularly to the separation of human nature from historical processes. Like Rousseau, Maistre seeks human nature in the past; but where for Rousseau human nature is purely apprehensible only without God and before society, for Maistre human nature is God's vessel and reveals itself only historically. It is on this point that Maistre and Rousseau differ most noticeably in their approach to the past. The closing lines of *Du contrat social* assert that the social pact substitutes a "natural and legitimate equality" for the "physical inequality" introduced by nature. In taking humans as they are and laws as they should be, it institutes a true utopia, severing moral truths from natural and historical truths. Book 4's procedure of analyzing societies historically in order to determine humanity's social nature indicates, however, that Rousseau does believe the two truths can meet, during the birth of small nations whose souls are still new and hence liable to be molded. Cogently, Rousseau hopes to retrieve the two truths by applying two tools of human self-knowledge: history and the inwardly revealed fable-as-history.

De l'état de nature, by contrast, puts forward only one object of human self-knowledge: a history extrinsically disclosed through moralizing and erudite study, and radically antithetical to the hermeneutically powerful poetry that emanates from Rousseau's fable. Where the eighteenth century divinized poets as the only ones capable of restoring holy forces to a world from which the gods had departed,⁴¹ Maistre strips poetry of sacredness and lends divine value instead to its actual content. He conceptualizes poetry as a source of information about nature indirectly revealing of God himself, a mere transmitter of facts that may prove useful to spiritual development. By the same token, history, rather than poetry or fable, becomes the new conveyor of moral knowledge, the guide to spiritual self-realization par excellence. Its new status signals a value shift away from the accidents of Rousseau's imagined world toward the efficacious facts of sociohistorical reality.

The shift was embedded in eighteenth-century debates on the legitimate relationship between right and fact. In chapter 3 of book 30 of *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), Montesquieu reproached the abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742) for having written a history⁴² proving the *thèse romaniste*, or the idea that the French monarchy descends legally from the Roman Empire, on liter-

41. Starobinski, *Blessings in Disguise; or, The Morality of Evil*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 189–90.

42. *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules*, 3 vols. (Paris: Osmont, 1734–35).

ary rather than historical juristic evidence.⁴³ This latter, according to Montesquieu, though “cold, dry, insipid, and hard,” should be “devoured, as the fable says that Saturn devoured stones.”⁴⁴ Dubos’ motivation in resorting to poets had been the antiaristocratic one of depriving the Frankish-descended nobility of its historic rights, and hence of its contemporary political rights; while Montesquieu evoked medieval jurisprudence to establish upper-class privilege as a political truth. In the second *Discours*, Rousseau rejected historical proofs of political legitimacy and attacked erudition for serving to establish right by fact.⁴⁵ This passage, read attentively in *De l’état de nature*, provoked Maistre to side with Montesquieu, Grotius, and Dubos in defending erudition as a source of truth that could be readily tapped in poetry. Although, Maistre argues, one can certainly abuse erudition and render it “favorable to tyrants” as Rousseau claimed, it is not, after all, so bad “to establish *right* by *fact*: to know the nature of man, the shortest and wisest means is . . . to know what he has always been. . . . History is experimental politics; it is the best or rather the only good one.” Furthermore, “to establish facts, poets are as good witnesses as other writers.”⁴⁶ Ovid, for instance, provides excellent evidence of temperature change across the ages, and Homer, speaking through Odysseus in praise of a single man’s leadership, conveys eloquently what ancient common sense thought about sovereignty. Poetry, in short, can have a political theoretical value equivalent to that of any other kind of text.

The problem of hermeneutics is thus escaped: with poetry leveled to erudition, all facts, all signs of God in the world become equally valuable in informing us of his designs for us, and all knowledge may transform, if proven true, into divine revelation. Maistre was not the first to make this move. Eighteenth-century Catholic apologetics had long wielded the *fact* of revelation as a weapon in the combat against *esprits forts*, who, as the archbishop of Lyons observed, did not argue strictly from facts but from present customs and human reason, and above all from probability and what seemed true to *them*.⁴⁷ Maistre’s innovation was to combine the methods of believers and unbelievers, using facts to establish the near certainty of the probable—and, more dangerously, of the faith. Importantly, in divinizing facts, Maistre

43. Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*, ed. Laurent Versini (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 2:1060–61, 1066n.

44. *Ibid.*, 2:1056.

45. Rousseau, “Discours sur les origines et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes,” *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:182–83.

46. *OC*, 7:539.

47. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*, 84.

contradicted his own condemnation of scientific knowledge; but of the two positions, it was without question the sacredness of the fact that had the most abundant posterity.

Not that Maistre valued erudition alone and eschewed all fables; or that the obverse was true of Rousseau. Jean-Jacques had implicitly valorized erudition in the *Discours*, declaring that the fable is pedagogically useful in divining truth when facts are unavailable.⁴⁸ Similarly, Maistre found epistemological uses for the fable in the absence of facts. But the Rousseauian fabulous was revealing insofar as it simulated reality successfully, whereas Maistrian fables, deprived of their autonomous hermeneutic status, highlighted the sole and ultimate truth of facts by depicting situations distanced from reality. “Le duel n’est point un crime,” one of Maistre’s *Six paradoxes* (1795), was in this spirit. A satire of Rousseau’s idea that society and language could have been consensually devised, this little piece depicts a primitive assembly in a forest, complete with troglodytic avatars of Robespierre, Rousseau, and Voltaire, all decreeing the birth of language and the social state.⁴⁹ The fable that had been Rousseau’s ideal epistemological tool becomes a means to mock the knowledge constructed by a hypothesizing imagination. Similarly, *De l’état de nature* depicts an imaginary lone man who had never been a child and had always possessed all the strength and knowledge necessary to survive. At some point, this man must have taken refuge in a cavern to protect himself from the elements. So far, he had been a natural man. But had he extended his home by placing a few branches on sticks at the entrance, that would incontestably have modified his natural environment. Would this ceiling of leaves, then, have belonged to divine will or to human art? Rousseau, says Maistre, would probably have argued that man was already corrupted by then. Hypothesis derides its own excesses and unveils the follies of Rousseau’s unsupported reasoning: “Follow it,” writes Maistre, “and you will see it is an abuse to boil an egg.”⁵⁰ The fable-as-history, that triumph of the imagination, is subordinated to the reason it was once intended to produce, but that now emanates from nature itself; and the fabulous is allowed to survive only in order to reveal the imagination’s distance from past factuality—itsself now conducive to God. Rousseau’s mystical communion with the imagined primitive has been replaced with an understanding of the divine through the real.

48. Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*, 57.

49. OC, 6:283–93.

50. Ibid., 7:532.

Human Nature Renewed: As Historical Perfectibility

Rousseau's *Discours* had presented human perfectibility as the main agent of historical progress, the initiator of history through the "fall." But for Maistre, Rousseau's explanation of history is purely mechanistic and consistent only with a humanity akin to bees or ants, whose art is timeless, accomplishing today exactly what it did yesterday. It was an unjust reading, but it led Maistre to believe that Rousseau had missed perfectibility, or the fact that man's art, "as varied as his conceptions, is susceptible of more or less in a latitude to which it is impossible to assign limits."⁵¹ The Scholastic distinction between moved irrational beings and self-moving rational beings reappears; but this time it drives human history with human perfectibility, or with the capacity for change through activity in exceptional natural situations.

Where, then, Rousseau in the second *Discours* considers animals only in terms of their use value to humanity, Maistre defines perfectibility on the basis of the essential distinctiveness of human and animal nature. He thus supports—unwittingly—the Cartesian human universal of the Savoyard vicar against the skeptical tradition that Pierre Charron (1541–1603) and Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) expounded most famously when defending the diversity of minds and souls. The latter's work was continued by the Epicureans—notably François de La Mothe Le Vayer (1588–1672) and René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1683–1757)—who daringly suggested the perfect comparability of animals and humans, and even asserted the occasional superiority of animals to humans. La Mothe Le Vayer's moralistic *petit traité Des asnes* (letter 74) eulogized donkeys' patience, generosity, and humor, and contrasted these animal virtues with humans' animal stupidity ("bêtise"). In a similarly comparative spirit, Réaumur's *Dissertation sur l'histoire des insectes* (1734) analyzed different "peoples" of insects, concluding that wasp communities are monarchies because they live in villages and produce cardboard.

Rousseau's second *Discours* put forward a developmental model consistent with these works. In the libertine and Epicurean world of qualitative similarity between all minds and souls, there was little room for differentiation through latent power and it was contingency, rather, that acquired a determining importance in development. Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653) and Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–51), as well as most philosophers of the Enlightenment—Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–71), Paul-Henri

51. Ibid., 7:531.

Thiry, Baron D'Holbach (1723–89), Denis Diderot (1713–84), Montesquieu (1689–1755), Étienne-Gabriel Morelly (b. 1717?)⁵²—all posited comparable minds in an accidental world. Certainly, the second *Discours* made no attempt to compare humans and animals, and indeed the Savoyard vicar's assertion of humanity's sole possession of conscience would suggest that on this point Rousseau was in the Cartesian camp. Yet the enchanted state “still very near to animality”⁵³ described in the *Discours* as that truest to humanity did give some substance to Voltaire's famous comment to Rousseau that “one wants to walk on all fours when one reads your work.”⁵⁴ Uninterested in emphasizing the plurality of minds, Rousseau became one of the first thinkers to systematize contingency, modeling development as resulting from accidental “obstacles” or circumstances “*peripheral*” to man and productive of the evil that Christian tradition had until then imputed to man himself.⁵⁵ For Rousseau, evil is the passion for the exterior, for seeming, for the possession of material goods; and this exteriority causes the fall into society. Progress hence proceeds from man's relations with his environment rather than from qualities inherent in his nature. It occurs not continuously throughout history, but in spurts and starts, when obstacles to human conservation and desire arise accidentally in the natural or social states; so that it is possible for humankind to remain during an indefinite amount of time in a given state of progress—like that ideal “just middle,” that “true youth of the world” that knew only the rudiments of government. In the game between human perfectibility and accident, then, it is accident that primarily determines human development for Rousseau.

De l'état de nature posits a similar interaction between human perfectibility and circumstance. The difference here, however, is that circumstance is organized by Providence, and that human nature plays a much greater role as an agent of historical change. The “varied” nature of “man's art” is the major source of the improvement that results in civilization. Change might therefore occur more rapidly in some periods than in others, and in accordance with the unknowable limits of divine provision and human art. But change remains always the order of the day. While *De l'état de nature* itself did not conclude this, it put forward the principles that would enable doing so years

52. Morelly may have never actually existed. The name may be the pseudonym of Diderot, to whom the *Code de la nature* (1755) was attributed until the early twentieth century, or of François-Vincent Toussaint (1715–72).

53. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 15.

54. Voltaire: *Correspondance*, ed. Theodore Besterman (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 4:539.

55. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 23.

later, when Maistre assumed moral vicissitude to be the natural constant of human history. As he pithily and vividly put it in a letter of 1808, given “the eventual agitations of the moral and political world, to make one’s safety and health depend on the constant dispositions of any Court is literally like lying down, in order to sleep in peace, on the wing of a windmill.”⁵⁶

Philosophically, Maistre belonged to the tradition of entelechy that Aristotle began, Thomas Aquinas Christianized, and Leibniz eloquently represented in modernity. Through entelechy the implicit—which, with Augustinian theology and Scholasticism, became intrinsically moral and divinely preinscribed in man—tends to develop toward its natural end within a purposive universe. Often associated with natural sociability, entelechy was welcomed by conservative thinkers who preferred to see progress immanent in nature rather than incarnated in the revolutionary genius that Turgot had conjured as its agent. Edmund Burke, for one, made of entelechy (termed by him “improvement”) a pillar of society.⁵⁷ For him, societies that are healthy and alive develop naturally toward their natural end, bettering continually as ambition and imitation operate to impose voluntary, ever-evolving inequality and a social order emulative of nature.

Maistre himself reflected little on inequality and showed little interest in the political operation of imitation and ambition. But his principle of perfectibility resembled the entelechy of Burke and the Aristotelians. It was, first of all, the moving principle of living societies, whose historical trajectory resembled an individual life: *De la souveraineté*, composed in the same period as *De l’état de nature*, made this clear. Second, Maistrian perfectibility truly modeled the development of the purposive implicit. Premised on action—on human “art”—it was unrelated to the discursive rationality that according to Turgot determined the pace of progress.

Entelechy was not limited to human beings. One of Leibniz’s aims in the *Monadologie* (1714) had been to bridge the Cartesian divide between self-moving humans and an inert nature by returning to a Platonic and Aristotelian universe where all the world’s souls develop autonomously toward their telos. Maistre’s combat against Rousseau, however, required a more rigorously Cartesian theoretical framework that, in distinguishing humans carefully from animals, privileged human history as moved by principles different from natural history. *De l’état de nature* finally asserted the intimate relationship between a distinctively human nature and incessant becoming by

56. OC, 11:98.

57. Harris, introduction to *Burke*, xxv.

declaring that history holds the key to knowledge of the human: “One can imagine only two ways of knowing the destiny of man: history and anatomy. The first shows what he has always been; the second shows how his organs respond to his destiny, and certify it.”⁵⁸ Put another way, what humanity has been, and what humanity will become, is what humanity *is*. The theoretical negation of the *Discours* (or, more accurately, of Maistre’s reading of the *Discours*) is complete: human nature is moral, constantly becoming, historically active and determinative (rather than responsive to utility), and knowable not by imagining but through the sciences of memory.

De l’état de nature Staged: The Paradox on Gambling

In 1795, in Lausanne, Maistre composed the *Six paradoxes*, a text addressed to a probably fictional recipient, the Marquise de Nav. . . . Maistre was exceedingly fond of paradoxes for the powers of argumentation they conferred. As he wrote to the “marquise”: “If I were to go and say, for instance, quite simply that Locke is an author as superficial as he is dangerous, this or that modern would like to tear my eyes out; but if I tell him, Monsieur, it is a paradox, he has no longer right nor reason to be angry.”⁵⁹ Beyond their jocular and persuasive qualities, however, Maistre liked paradoxes for their usefulness in expressing the ironies of human destiny. “La chose la plus utile aux hommes, c’est le jeu,” (Gambling is the thing most useful to men), the third of the five⁶⁰ paradoxes Maistre finally composed, is a frivolous adaptation of *De l’état de nature*’s model of human history.

What Maistre finds paradoxical about gambling is that, considering the moral and intellectual shortcomings of men, nothing is better for them than to play. “They are . . . so dangerous, so vain, that they need habit to be able to stand themselves.”⁶¹ Maistre opens his piece by playfully evoking the world of cards and casinos; but it soon becomes clear that he is continuously referring, obliquely, to social relations in general, and that by “gambling” he means whatever habit men engage in that “forces [them] to look at one another.” Rousseau had followed Pascal to evoke similar themes before, discerning in society a refuge of activities and distractions designed to prevent man from doing what is

58. *OC*, 7:539.

59. *Ibid.*, 6:282.

60. Maistre composed only five paradoxes, ostensibly addressed to the Marquise de Nav. . . . As a result, his manuscript was known for over a century as *Cinq paradoxes à Madame la Marquise de Nav* . . . Originally, however, Maistre placed at the top of his manuscript the title *Six paradoxes*. It seems that he had intended to write a sixth paradox but that he never finished the collection. In his 2007 edition of the *Oeuvres*, Pierre Glaudes has restored the original title.

61. *Ibid.*, 6:299.

most unbearable for him—looking at himself.⁶² In keeping with his critique of Rousseau's concept of society and with the literary form he has chosen, however, Maistre addresses the problem with levity rather than condemnation. In all, he says, to succeed in the affairs of this world, it is necessary to have a player's mentality. One must excel at becoming other people's habit, since habit is the most basic component of the human character and the key to succeeding with people. In addition, gambling aids social performance because it encourages the probabilistic reasoning indispensable to all human rapports. What Cicero said of his philosophical school, "we follow appearances, must be the motto of the sensible man to conduct his behavior; for all of life is only a continuous calculation of probabilities, and one needs marvelous mental accuracy to decide often without thinking." Gambling, in short, develops the ability for quickly guessing the future course of phenomena on the basis of appearances—the kind of judgment that is a man's most useful possession in "society" (here meant in the dual eighteenth-century sense of polite society and sociability).⁶³ What is more, gambling cultivates memory like nothing else:

When I see a gambler tell me that, in a game played six months ago, he lost fifty louis because of Monsieur So-and-So, who played a jack of hearts, from which it happened that his, the teller's, partner felt justified in thinking that the queen was on this side, since the ten, the seven, and the four had passed, and unfortunately decided to play the ace; that if he had been able to predict this hand, he would have resolved the situation by playing the spade he had left, since all the diamonds were on the same side. . . . Oh! I bow down, I prostrate myself, I abase myself. I too have a memory, but it is a child.⁶⁴

Chance here is no pure accident: it is integral to social situations, knowable through the apt interpretation of semblance, and above all, memorable once games have revealed its ways. The gambler's art—human "art"—is to recall the past precisely so as to learn from experience, and act on the basis of ever more accurate predictions of future situations. The moral and intellectual improvement that results from frivolity is the crux of the paradox: that the mind and soul should form on the "narrow field of the green tabletop,"⁶⁵ and through the improvisation required by playing.

Without making too much of a flippant piece, the paradox on gambling contains, if not an anti-Rousseauian philosophy of history, at least a model

62. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 155.

63. *Ibid.*, 268.

64. *OC*, 6:304.

65. *Ibid.*, 6:303.

of human development quite consistent with Maistre's critique of Rousseau. Original in an act of will—the decision to play—gambling proceeds by observing phenomena, calculating probabilities, and acting quickly and instinctively. Reason is a posteriori, exercised to examine the workings of chance so as to improve instinctive judgment and presence of mind for the next roll of the dice. All of human existence in duration may be seen as a game: as humanity learns about nature in order to progress, individual man “seizes his peers” to perfect and advance himself. Gambling, like God-willed nature, provides freedom within rules. The good player is the one who, by nature, can use this freedom to develop morally through will, instinctive action, probability calculation, and conscientious remembrance.

The paradox on gambling also conveys themes from *De la souveraineté du peuple*, Maistre's other major anti-Rousseauian work, which studies the development of polities.

The Genius, the Legislator, and the Efficiency of Silence

Book 1 of *De la souveraineté*, entitled “Des origines de la souveraineté,” discusses the human and divine sources of sovereignty, while book 2, “De la nature de la souveraineté,” models the historical success and demise of various types of government. Both books express a pious skepticism that, rather than limit itself to humble confessions of ignorance before the unknowable in the tradition of Charron and Montaigne, purports instead to identify it with the divine and thereby ultimately explanatory. Assuming God to be generally responsible for beginnings in history, as he is for the beginning of history, Maistre argues that neither society nor political constitutions can be products of rational human deliberation. God is the source of all polities, which he creates in one of two ways:

Almost always [reserving] to himself more immediately the formation [of a government, he makes] it, so to speak, sprout insensibly like a plant, by the collaboration of an infinity of circumstances that we say are fortuitous; but when he wants to lay the foundations of a political edifice all at once, and show to the universe a creation of this kind, it is to rare men, it is to veritable elect that he confides his powers: placed at great distances across the centuries, they rise like obelisks on the road of time, and as the human species grows older, they appear more rarely.⁶⁶

66. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple: Un anti-contrat social*, ed. Jean-Louis Darcel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 122.

These “elect” bear an arresting resemblance to the Legislator of *Du contrat social*. Like him, they are quasi-divine lawmakers, modeled on Lycurgus, fashioners of young peoples who possess the mysterious power of communicating to a nation that “moral temperament, that character, that general soul that must, through the centuries and an infinite number of generations, subsist in a sensible manner and distinguish a people from all others.”⁶⁷

But Maistre’s legislator also differs from Rousseau’s in important ways. Whereas the art of Rousseau’s Legislator is to train individual citizens to prefer the general will to their own, that of Maistre’s legislator is to speed up what God would have done imperceptibly through circumstance instead. Rousseau’s Legislator is rational and duplicitous: he veils his power so the people may believe they are free,⁶⁸ and claims divine inspiration in order to enforce conformity. Maistre’s legislator, by contrast, is a genius who acts instinctively, in ingenuous ignorance of his abilities. He is creative, insofar as a man can be, assembling what God has provided; and unselfconscious, immersed in the activities of his soul. His is a pure genius that “often does not realize what it does . . . and . . . in this above all . . . differs from intelligence.”⁶⁹ Unlike Rousseau’s revolutionary Legislator who arranges the annihilation of particular wills and the birth of the society of the general will, Maistre’s legislator is a quiet director whose “infallible instinct” encourages already existing tendencies, organizing the real in the interests of the good in a manner inscrutable rather than convulsive. Invested by God “with an extraordinary power, often unknown by [his] contemporaries, and maybe by [himself],” the legislator walks with “a sacred character [shining] on [his] forehead,”⁷⁰ and disposes in silence.

If the Maistrian legislator acquired his political identity in an encounter with Rousseau, he received his historical mission from Turgot, whose genius was “that receptive mediator who grasped novelty, who was unbound by previous modes of perception, and who dared to articulate what he saw.”⁷¹ His purpose was to accelerate historical progress by producing what had not existed before; and the aim of good government was to increase his frequency in the population by creating circumstances favorable to his development.

67. Ibid., 121.

68. Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 442.

69. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 122.

70. Ibid., 123.

71. Frank Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 26.

But if both Turgot's and Maistre's geniuses accelerate the achievement of the common good, the former does so *ex nihilo*, and the latter by fostering the natural. Their respective historical roles are also opposed: Maistre's genius legislator is a man of primitive times destined to fade with time and in accord with humanity's learning of the world's laws. Turgot's genius, by contrast, is a man of the future whose existence and activity have to be artificially enhanced by every means possible in the interests of hastening utopia and compensating for the stagnation of past centuries.

His revolutionary role aside, Turgot's genius remained a rather old-fashioned character who could have been readily accepted into Fontenelle's academy and had none of the psychological complexities of *Le neveu de Rameau*.⁷² It thus fell to Diderot to describe the psychology of the Enlightenment's genius and to set the emotional standard for geniuses to come—Maistre's included. In the *Encyclopédie*'s article "Génie," Diderot describes a Lockean hero whose imaginative soul is moved by everything surrounding him. Enthusiastic, "he disposes neither of nature nor of the succession of his ideas; he is transported into the situation of the characters, he springs into action; he [takes] on their personality." Observing rapidly "a great space," "a multitude of beings," the genius "[gives birth] to brilliant systems, or [discovers] great truths." His fundamentally sensitive and passionate character, however, is ill suited to the political arts: "sangfroid," the first quality requisite in a ruler, is excluded in men overpowered by their imagination. They are more qualified "to overthrow or found states than to maintain them, and to reestablish order than to follow it."⁷³ Diderot's genius may hence organize if need be but has also an instinct for disorder, and it is in this that he differs most importantly from Maistre's genius, an enemy of destruction defined primarily by the capacity to establish political order.⁷⁴ Free from the unloosed imagination, Maistre's legislator is deeply sensitive to the reality that he responds to by arranging, caring nothing for abstract truths and even less for the philosophical systems they compose. Yet a fundamentally active and self-oblivious nature is the corollary of this creativity, and constitutes the major similarity between Maistre's genius and Diderot's *exalté*. As Maistre wrote in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* (completed in 1816): "The true man of genius is the one who acts *by movement* or by impulsion, without

72. Ibid., 27.

73. Denis Diderot, "Génie," in *Encyclopédie; ou, Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Jean Le Rond D'Alembert and Denis Diderot (Neufchâtel [Paris], 1751–65), 7:581–84.

74. On Maistre's concept of genius, see Darrin McMahon, "Maistre's Genius," in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, ed. Armenteros and Lebrun.

ever contemplating himself, and without ever saying to himself: *Yes! It is by movement that I act.*”⁷⁵

In the end, however, if legislative geniuses disappear from history, all governments are brought into being by a creative principle that, sometimes incarnated in human form and sometimes not, always operates identically if at varying speeds. Here Maistre preserves Turgot’s concept of a dynamic historical agent whose existence enables history to be explained rationally, without “the slavish patterning of the science of man after the science of physics” being necessary.⁷⁶ Yet Newton’s proposition that mechanics are unknowable at the origins still holds. “If sometimes,” Maistre argues in book 1,

one does not know how to distinguish the bases of a government in its infancy, it does not at all follow that they do not exist. See these two embryos: Can your eye perceive any difference between them? Yet one is Achilles, and the other Thersitus. Let us not confuse developments with creations.⁷⁷

Like Newton, Maistre presumes origins to be inaccessible to rational analysis. At the same time, though, he transforms Rousseau and Descartes to argue that God imbues the principle of movement within man, that this principle is most active at beginnings, and that it is functional in precise proportion to its obscurity. In fact, in the political realm, the most durable and expedient government is also that whose origins are most incomprehensible. The sole, yet crucial, divergence from Rousseau is that such incomprehension presumes a government unrooted in the will of the governed:

All peoples have the government that suits them, and none has chosen its own. It is even remarkable that it is almost always to its misfortune that [a people] tries to give itself [a government], or, to speak more exactly, that too great a proportion of the people strives to attain this object: since in this dreadful fumbling around, it is too easy for it to make a mistake regarding its true interests; for it to pursue determinedly what cannot be suitable for it, and to reject instead what is most suitable: and it is known how terrible errors in this ambit are. This is what made Tacitus say, with his usual depth, that it is *much less unsuitable for a people to accept a sovereign than to look for one.*⁷⁸

75. OC, 6:54.

76. Manuel, *Prophets of Paris*, 20.

77. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 127–28.

78. Ibid., 128.

Kant did not inspire this statement; but in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785) he, too, warned that

a people should not *inquire* with any practical aim in view into the origin of the supreme authority to which it is subject, that is, a subject *ought not to rationalize* for the sake of action about the origin of this authority, as a right that can still be called into question [*ius controversum*] with regard to the obedience he owes it. . . . Whether a state began with an actual contract of submission as a fact, or whether power came first and law arrived only afterward, or even whether they should have followed in this order: for a people already subject to civil law these rationalizations are altogether pointless and, moreover, threaten a state with danger.⁷⁹

Kant wrote of legality and obedience, while Maistre evoked interest and will. But both expressed the Enlightenment's fear that its own encouragement of reason, individual choice, and analysis might, when applied to the workings of government, prove disastrous for the survival of political society. Indeed, of all Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau was probably the boldest in his willingness to accord nearly limitless uses to reason in determining the origin and legitimacy of governments. Maistre's answer to him was not to impose, like Kant, boundaries on deliberative reason; but to blot out all possibility of deliberation in preference for a model of optimal political action based on a posteriori consideration of the way in which nations actually develop historically. When discussing national birth, Maistre puts forward a metaphysics of efficiency whereby a silent and effortlessly active divine legislator fashions a constitution for a people acquiescent of its political state; or where, alternatively—and, functionally speaking, identically—a government grows quietly and imperceptibly out of the character of a people. Brushing aside consensus and negotiation from the constitution-making process replaces politics in a universe “grown” rather than “constructed,” and characterized most precisely by its inscrutability. Horace's verse *crescit occulto velut arbor aevo*, “imperceptibly, through the ages, it grows like a tree,”⁸⁰ is a favorite motto of Maistre's when describing the development of customs and institutions.⁸¹

Maistre had encountered the idea of the political implicit most recently in Saint-Martin's *Lettre à un ami* (1794), which consoled its readers for

79. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129–30.

80. *Odes* 1.12.45.

81. OC, 9:358; OC, 1:259.

revolutionary violence by assuring that “Providence likes to walk down hidden paths, to show its secrets only under clouds, in order to handle the weak who could be dazzled by their splendor, to wrest them away from the impious who would desecrate them, and to maintain even the just under alert.”⁸² In the field of law, however, the most probable precursor of Maistre’s postrevolutionary idea of tacit efficacy was Montesquieu, who in book 28 of *De l’esprit des lois* argued—like Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologia*⁸³—that unwritten customs can also constitute legislation. Thus Montesquieu categorized the *moeurs* of medieval Germanic peoples as laws in their own right that, though unwritten and applied in exceedingly variegated contexts, were still rational and socially functional in a manner exactly comparable to Roman law.

Yet Maistre’s belief that the elements of the political world are divine creations politically efficient and historically creative by silence is probably most indebted to Tacitus. Maistre always harbored a special respect for the austere author of the *Annals of Imperial Rome*—a regard that pervades *De la souveraineté*, and that is readily expected in a Savoyard. Since the sixteenth century, Tacitism had been extremely popular in the absolutist kingdom of Piedmont, where Carlo Pasquale (1547–1625) composed the first full commentary on Tacitus (1581), and where Giovanni Botero (1544–1617) was born and lived out his creative years.⁸⁴ Maistre himself studied Tacitus since adolescence, reading and noting him down extensively in the *Registres de lecture* during the years 1774–94. And he was of course long familiar with the skeptics who rehabilitated him, such as Charron and Montaigne—the spiritually mercurial Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), whom he began annotating only in 1798, perhaps alone excepted.⁸⁵

Maistre’s penchant for the nostalgic Roman republican, however, did not represent the cosmopolitan tastes of his time. If every moralist of the *grand siècle* from Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) to Jean de La Bruyère (1645–96) had owed something to Tacitus in the study of hypocrisy,⁸⁶ the eighteenth century had disliked him, and the *Encyclopédistes* had read him only to make

82. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, *Lettre à un ami; ou, Considérations politiques, philosophiques, et religieuses, sur la révolution française* (Paris: J.-B. Louvet, 1794–95), 77.

83. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologia*, q. 103 a. 1.

84. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651*, 65.

85. Richard Lebrun, “Les lectures de Joseph de Maistre d’après ses registres inédits,” *REM* 9 (1985): 173.

86. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 123.

of him an “enlightened enemy of obscurantist princes.”⁸⁷ Tacitus was best known to modernity through the “new humanism” of the 1570s that, responding to the failure of L’Hôpital’s program to reconcile rival religious confessions, advocated Stoic mastery over the passions and the political uses of knowledge. Among his modern readers one could not name Tacitus without naming his insistence on silence, a facet of his thought that made him philosophically more consonant with Christian theology than with Enlightenment materialism. Indeed, Tacitean notions about the political efficiency of silence proved strangely apt companions to a Christian mysticism that pronounced the inscrutably divine to possess worldly agency. Maistre’s innovation was to go further than the skeptics and the reason of state theorists to give Tacitus a mystical and epistemological turn, proposing the *intrinsically* unknowable to be divine. The Tacitean tradition had until then emphasized simply that deliberate secrecy is a brute matter of state survival and functioning; but Maistre conceived of the *objectively* hidden as politically durable and productive of national happiness.

Tacitus’s determination of stability by secrecy was a trope of the literary tradition of the *miroir du prince*. The *Discours historique à Monseigneur le Dauphin* (1736), for example, instructed the future king that “secrecy is the soul of great matters, and is especially necessary in finances. The more the state’s strength is unknown, the more it is respectable.”⁸⁸ But the publication of Necker’s *Compte rendu au roi* (1781) shattered the illusion so carefully preserved. With the state irrevocably exposed, *De la souveraineté* shows the divine unknown stabilizing government by producing sociopolitical conditions. It applies a new Tacitism to salvage monarchy by rendering what had before been designedly hidden, now naturally and efficaciously so.

Mediocrity Divine, or Monarchy as Archimedes’ Pulley

Book 2 of *De la souveraineté* defends monarchy on grounds that it is natural to humankind: “One can say in general that men are born for monarchy,” says Maistre, since it is the most ancient and common form of government, in the Old World and the New; and since “men identify it with sovereignty without realizing, they seem to agree tacitly that there is no real *sovereign* wherever there is no king.”⁸⁹ Even the *philosophes* conceded this inadvertently,

87. Ibid., 126–27.

88. Éric Brian, *La mesure de l’état: Administrateurs et géomètres au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 1994), 155.

89. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 185.

since they “always resent *kings* and speak only of *kings*. They do not want to believe that the authority of kings comes from God; but it is not a matter of *royalty* in particular: it is a matter of *sovereignty* in general.”⁹⁰ The *philosophes*, avers Maistre, can be satisfied with nothing less than the dissolution of government:

They do not want any government, because there is none that does not claim obedience; it is not *this* authority they detest, it is *authority*: they can stand none. But if you press them, they will tell you that they want, like Turgot, *a large democracy*; Condorcet even had already drawn with his wise hand that big square circle; but . . . that plan was not fortunate.⁹¹

The “big square circle” is a reference to Rousseau’s late, pessimistic letter to Mirabeau, where he confessed that “here according to my old ideas is the political problem that I compare to that of the squaring of the circle in geometry and to that of longitudes in astronomy: *how to find a form of government that puts the law above man*.”⁹² Montesquieu had pondered the same problem while reclassifying governments. Book 3 of *De l’esprit des lois* challenged Aristotle’s six classic constitutions by dividing governments into monarchies, republics, and despotic regimes animated by honor, virtue, and fear, respectively. After Rousseau, the *idéologues* did away with Montesquieu’s animating principles (objecting to them for presupposing metaphysics), mechanized the old French principle of absolute government, and redefined sovereignty as rational governmental function.

It was Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) who elaborated the *idéologue* method of classifying governments. He divided them into “national” governments that served the public interest and “special” ones that supported a privileged group. At the other end of the political spectrum and in the 1760s, Burke had described the governments of Ireland and Great Britain in precisely these terms, arguing that the former governed for the rulers and the latter for the ruled.⁹³ The coincidence was by no means extraordinary, since Tracy and Burke were simply reformulating the Aristotelian division of governments into “good” and “bad” according to whether they put the law above man and served the interests of the polis,

90. Ibid., 186.

91. Ibid., 260.

92. *Correspondance complète de Rousseau*, ed. R. A. Leigh (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1979), 33:243.

93. Burke, *Burke: Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, xxviii.

or put man above the law and served those of the rulers. In the context of *idéologie*, however, with sovereignty functionalized,⁹⁴ moral truths rendered mathematically calculable, and individuals expressed as interchangeable variables, Tracy's division of governments into "national" and "special" implied a sovereignty that was still absolute, yet newly computable in terms of the individuals composing the state.

Casting sovereignty no longer in terms of the nation (like the constitution of 1789) or of the people (1793), the *idéologue* constitution of 1795—drafted and adopted during the composition of *De la souveraineté*—assumed that sovereignty was held by the body of citizens, that is, by individuals who possess rights because they fulfill particular functions.⁹⁵ Maistre's insistence that large democracies are inviable suggests that he may inadvertently have begun to think of governments in terms of their authoritative function and the size of the citizen body thanks to the very *idéologues* whose political ideals he criticized while they triumphed in Paris. Yet Maistre's theory of sovereignty departs from *idéologie* on two important points. First, by virtue of his mystical-Tacitean belief in the efficacy of the unknown, Maistre posits that the worth of a government and the size of the sovereign are negatively rather than positively correlated. Second, and related, Maistre rejects popular sovereignty on Bodin's principle that rulers and ruled always have a distinct and mutually exclusive identity. Governments cannot therefore be classified solely on the basis of the number of citizens, but should also (and primarily) be defined on the basis of the number of sovereigns:

The ordinary division of governments into three kinds, the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic, rests completely on a Greek prejudice that took over the schools [of the Renaissance], and of which we have not been able to rid ourselves. The Greeks saw always the universe in Greece; and as the three types of government were quite balanced in that little country, the political men of that nation imagined the general division of which I tell you. But if one wishes to be exact, rigorous logic does not at all permit to establish a genre on an exception, and, to express oneself exactly, one should say: men in general are governed by kings. Yet one sees nations where sovereignty belongs to many, and these governments can be called aristocracy or

94. Cheryl Welch, *Liberty and Utility: The French idéologues and the Transformation of Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 32.

95. *Ibid.*, 29.

democracy, according to THE NUMBER of people who make up THE SOVEREIGN.⁹⁶

In keeping with the logic of the Counter-Enlightenment, which identified the best with the most widespread, monarchy is the most global form of government because it is the most efficient; and it is the most efficient because, deposited in the fewest number of people possible, it is subject to the least discussion and thus approaches most closely the absolute quality that French political thought since Bodin had attributed to sovereignty. The influence of *idéologie*, which was then being applied to the French constitution, is apparent in the extension of this argument to the citizen body: if sovereignty must be condensed among the sovereigns, so must its effects be among the governed. Hence Maistre's dubbing of Condorcet's "large democracy" a "square circle," and his certainty, in the *Considérations sur la France*, that the French Republic cannot last, being "a large indivisible republic."⁹⁷ In short, the most efficient government is a small monarchy, and monarchy in itself is the very essence of sovereignty.

The idea of monarchical efficiency was old: it was again Montesquieu who had argued, in chapter 5 of book 3 of *De l'esprit des lois*, that "in monarchies, politics can do great things with the least virtue . . . ; as, in the most beautiful machines, art employs also the least movements, forces, and wheels possible."⁹⁸ In *Du contrat social* Rousseau had reflected on kings while repeating the same opinion more lyrically, and asserting that in monarchies

"everything responds to the same motive: all the machine's springs are in the same hand; everything tends toward the same end; there are no opposing movements to destroy one another, and one cannot consider any kind of constitution in which less exertion produces greater results. Archimedes, calmly sitting on the shore and pulling without effort a big ship to the shore, is to me like a skilled monarch governing vast Estates from his cabinet, and making everything move while seeming immobile."

The word *skilled* [Maistre comments] is superfluous in this passage. The monarchical government is precisely that least dependent on the sovereign's skills. . . . One can profit more from Rousseau's comparison by making it more precise. Archimedes' glory was not to pull Hieron's galley toward him, but to have imagined the machine capable of executing that movement: and monarchy is precisely this machine. Men

96. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 186.

97. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 219.

98. Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, 1:120.

have not made it, since they can create nothing; it is the work of the *Eternal Geometer*, and the device's greatest merit is that a *mediocre man* [emphasis added] can make it work.⁹⁹

The question thus becomes why the most functional, and not the most virtuous, government should be the most desirable; and the answer, paradoxically, is a moral one. According to Maistre, it is necessary that a government be maximally functional because humanity is morally degraded. The paradox on gambling had depicted human mediocrity approximating moral perfection in the midst of the petty distractions of playing. Akin to this model, the humanity of *De la souveraineté* lives the best political life it may under the most average form of government. Monarchy is the political machine best suited to a humanity deficient in virtue, capable of discerning only appearances, and unable to run itself unaided.

As it was first written in French in 1495, *médiocre* lacked any pejorative connotations and denoted neutrally whatever was “medium in importance or dimensions.” By 1588, however, the word was already acquiring the negative associations it carries still and began to denote whatever is “below the mean, insufficient in quantity or quality.” In the eighteenth century, however, this second, more derogatory definition was still by no means predominant, nor were the negative meanings of mediocrity as strong then as they are today. *Le grand Robert* asserts that “the old examples of that use are less pejorative than modern examples, but the idea of insufficiency is present.”¹⁰⁰ Condillac, for one, could still define the word in its strictly neutral sense only three decades before the Revolution. “Mediocre,” he wrote in his *Dictionnaire de synonymes* (1760), is “what is neither big nor small, either literally or figuratively.” The synonym he chose for it was *passable*, “what is neither very good, nor very bad.”¹⁰¹ In fact, the popularization of the mediocre in its current meanings of “evil, inferior, pitiable,” “poor,” “weak, imperfect,” “wretched”¹⁰² had to await the revolutionary displacement of human nature by the model of normality, which *De la souveraineté*, dually associating mediocrity with the average and inferior, illustrates precociously.

As it acquired negative meanings, mediocrity was becoming associated in England with the epistemology of probability. Expanding on Descartes' defi-

99. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 195.

100. “Médiocre,” in *Le grand Robert de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey and Paul Robert (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2001), 4:1303.

101. Étienne-Bonnot de Condillac, “Médiocre” and “Passable,” *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac*, ed. Georges Le Roy, Auteurs Modernes Series (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), 3:377, 426.

102. “Médiocre,” in Rey and Robert, *Le grand Robert*, 4:1302.

nition of science as “certain and evident knowledge,” Locke distinguished carefully between uncertain experimental knowledge and certain scientific knowledge. Unlike Descartes, however, Locke did not believe that it was possible to attain certain knowledge of the nature of things in the physical world. He professed, instead, loyalty to the position of Samuel Clarke (1675–1729, whereby “man can have no rationally demonstrable knowledge of the nature of things in the physical world,” but only experimental knowledge of the effects he must ascribe “to the arbitrary will and good pleasure of the Wise Architect.”¹⁰³ Locke hence concluded gloomily, at the end of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, that God has given us nothing more than “a twilight, if I may so say, of probability . . . ; suitable, I presume, to the state of *mediocrity* [emphasis added] and probationership he has been pleased to place us in here.”¹⁰⁴ In this passage, where probability may be said to be born officially as an epistemological concept, mediocrity appears—possibly for the first time—as the human inability to understand causes. God alone knows the true or certain nature of causes. Humanity, far below its Maker in understanding, must content itself with probable knowledge—of the kind acquired during games, and proper to Maistre’s monarch.

The result of introducing the epistemological and moral concept of mediocrity into the theory of monarchy was a method for innovatively judging the viability of governments not on the basis of their particular functions, as the *idéologues* had done, but of their absolute functionality and average suitability to the moral condition of humankind. For Maistre, monarchy is the best type of government because it controls baseness and never requires excellence, whether popular or princely, from a humanity fundamentally corrupted and benighted—on average. In arguing this, he revived eighteenth-century discussions on the proper size of a perfect polity. *De la souveraineté* is one of the first political theoretical texts—if not the first—to see in the divinely constructed, self-operating machinery of government the moral “forces,” productive of averages, that would govern statistical science in the next century. It innovated in both political and statistical theory by making human mediocrity relevant to the operation of constitutions.

The innovation built on a long tradition. Moral principles had animated governments at least since Aristotle’s *Politics*. In Maistre’s time, Saint-Martin reiterated the theme, insisting in the *Lettre à un ami* that Providence

103. Keith Baker, *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 131.

104. John Locke, “Of Judgment” (Chapter 14 of Book 4), in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1825), 498.

can only make [governments] prosper insofar as they are vivified by its wisdom and its invariable reason. In a word (do not be afraid by what you are going to read) insofar as they truly have the theocratic spirit, not theocratic human, not to say infernal, . . . but theocratic divine, spiritual, and natural, that is, resting on the laws of immutable truth.¹⁰⁵

Maistre, too, places a soul in the machine like Descartes. But his soul is uniquely able to use the average to produce the durable—that is, the politically sound.

His machine is thus the most convenient of all governments—on average—because it possesses the greatest amount of sovereignty and hence of the “moral force,” the “vigor,” the inexplicable divine thing, *sui generis* and irreducible, that makes politics function—on average.

European Freedom, Republican Combinations, and the Making of History

One might claim that the divine royal machine is objectionable because liberty is the price of efficiency. But Maistre claims the opposite. For him, monarchy is the best government because it “gives or can give more *liberty and equality* to a greater number of men” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁶ Contrary to scholarly consensus, which claims that Maistre was a monarchist because he was an absolutist, he defended monarchy because he saw it as the government most capable of upholding the laws that limited its power. Not only that, but as he told one of his correspondents, the monarchist baron Vignet des Étoles (Savoyard intendant in the Valle d’Aosta during 1773–84), he believed absolute monarchies to be weak:

You tell me . . . that peoples will need *strong* governments, whereupon I ask you what you mean by that? If monarchy seems to you strong the more absolute it is, in that case, Naples, Madrid, Lisbon, etc., must seem to you vigorous governments. You know nonetheless, and everybody knows, that these monsters of weakness exist only thanks to their confidence. Be persuaded that, to strengthen monarchy, one must seat it on laws, avoid arbitrariness, frequent committees, continual mutations of employment, and ministerial dives.¹⁰⁷

105. Saint-Martin, *Lettre à un ami*, 58.

106. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 195.

107. Maistre, *Lettres et opuscules inédits du Cte Joseph de Maistre, précédés d’une notice biographique par son fils, le Cte Rodolphe de Maistre*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Vaton, 1851), 1:9–10.

Maistre supports monarchies, then, not because they can be absolute (republics, after all, can also be so), but rather because monarchy is the government best able to execute the principles of liberty that the Revolution has taken from it.

Monarchy's libertarian essence is proven by its history. Leaning on Hume, and echoing the *thèse germaniste* of book 30 of *De l'esprit des lois*, Maistre argues that in Europe liberty and Christian monarchy arose simultaneously during the Germanic invasions of the Roman Empire:

"The government of the Germanic peoples," says Hume [in the *History of England*], "and that of all the Nordic nations that were established on the ruins of the Roman Empire, was always extremely free. . . . The military despotism of Roman domination, which, before the irruption of these conquerors, had crushed souls and destroyed all generous principles of science and virtue, was not capable of resisting the vigorous efforts of a free people. A new age began for Europe: she discarded the bonds of servitude, and shook off the yoke of arbitrary power under which she had groaned for so long. The free constitutions that were then established, although later altered by the successive usurpations of a long line of princes, always preserve an air of liberty and the traces of a legal administration that make the nations of Europe distinct; and if this portion of the globe is distinguished from others by sentiments of freedom, honor, justice, she owes these advantages uniquely to the seeds sown by these generous barbarians."¹⁰⁸

After reading Tacitus's *Germania*, Montesquieu had concluded this also, discerning in the primitive Teutons the libertarian *Gemüt* that created representative governments, and was antithetical to the superficiality of decadent and

108. Quoted in Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 198. I have translated Maistre's translation of Hume to preserve the nuances of Maistre's interpretation. Here is Hume's original text: "The government of the Germans, and that of all the northern nations, who established themselves on the ruins of Rome, was always extremely free. . . . The military despotism, which had taken place in the Roman empire, and which, previously to the irruption of those conquerors, had sunk the genius of men, and destroyed every noble principle of science and virtue, was unable to resist the vigorous efforts of a free people; and Europe, as from a new epoch, rekindled her ancient spirit, and shook off the base servitude to arbitrary will and authority, under which she had so long labored. The free constitutions then established, however impaired by the encroachments of succeeding princes, still preserve an air of independence and legal administration, which distinguish the European nations; and if that part of the globe maintain sentiments of liberty, honor, equity, and valor superior to the rest of mankind, it owes these advantages chiefly to the seeds implanted by those generous barbarians." Hume, "The Anglo-Saxon Government and Manners," appendix 1 of *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, foreword by William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), 1. The Online Library of Liberty.

civilized Latin peoples accustomed to despotism. Applied to medieval France, this interpretation yielded a historical model where the Gauls were the shackled heirs of Roman civilization and the forefathers of the third estate; while their Germanic conquerors the Franks transmuted into a free, oppressive aristocracy. Elaborating on this narrative, Montesquieu formulated the *thèse nobiliaire*, calling for the king and the aristocracy to cooperate in the interests of freedom, while Voltaire became the best-known exponent (in *La Henriade* [1723]) of the *thèse royale*, recommending the alliance between the monarchy and the third estate, and the creation of a more egalitarian society free of aristocratic tyranny.¹⁰⁹

The *thèse royale*, the *thèse nobiliaire*, and their historical foundation were eighteenth-century commonplaces, and there is nothing unusual about Maistre's quoting of Hume's variation on them. What is remarkable is that Maistre melded Hume's rendering of barbaric freedom with the *thèse nobiliaire* to support a Christian Europeanism preceded only by Burke's vindication, in *An Essay toward an Abridgement of English History* (1758) (which Maistre apparently did not read), of church and feudal society as the foundations of European civilization.¹¹⁰ Conversing with Germaine de Staël (1766–1817) in 1796 may also have encouraged Maistre to see in Germanic Christian *Gemüt* the true European character. Closer to Hume, however, Maistre argued that the spirit of freedom is a native of Europe that has roamed through the centuries across the continent at large. It is that “indefinable force that agitates us [Europeans] without respite,” and the reason why in Europe “the greatest of evils is not poverty, or servitude, or illness, or death even: it is rest.”¹¹¹ Like Staël, and unlike Hume, however, Maistre sees in this free restlessness not only the barbarian spirit, but also the spirit of Christianity. A belief in the disparity between ancient and modern governments in the dispensation of freedom persuaded him—with the *idéologues*, Voltaire, and the Girondins, and against Rousseau, the Jacobins, and Coppel's republicans—that Christianity had forged a form of government unique among world governments for having institutionalized freedom.

Writing on republics, Tacitus observed that “*some nations bored of kings prefer laws to them.*”¹¹² This ancient antinomy between rule by laws and rule

109. For a detailed analysis of Montesquieu's theory of Frankish monarchy and its historical development, see Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

110. Harris, introduction to Burke, *Burke*, xxv–xxvii.

111. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 199.

112. Ibid., 196. The reference is to *The Annals*, Book 3, par. 26: “quidam statim aut postquam [populi] regum pertaesum leges maluerunt.” “Some [nations] from the beginning, or when tired of kings, preferred codes of laws.” The translation is taken from Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, The Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.3.iii.html>.

by kings was absent from modern Europe. Antiquity and Asia, wrote Maistre, never “disputed the right of kings to condemn to death,” but no European would hesitate to accuse of crime a king who executes arbitrarily. Providence balances everything: the Asian despot may sever his subjects’ heads at leisure, but his own head is often required in exchange for his excesses. Concomitantly, the European monarch is sacrosanct, yet he is bound by law to respect his subjects’ lives and to incorporate their advice and protestations into the process of government. What is more, the European, unlike the Oriental, “withstands only painfully to be completely alien to the government.”¹¹³ European monarchy is therefore designed for the preservation of freedom. King and law govern Europe together, according to a tacit constitution composed of six elements that recombine to give particular forms of government:

1. The king is sovereign, no one shares sovereignty with him, and all powers emanate from him.
2. His person is inviolable; no one has the right to depose or judge him.
3. He has no right to condemn to death, or even to any corporal punishment.
4. If he inflicts exile or imprisonment in cases when reason of state can forbid examination by tribunals, he could not be too cautious, nor act too much on the advice of an enlightened council.
5. The king cannot judge in civil matters; only magistrates in the name of the king. . . .¹¹⁴
6. Subjects have the right, by means of certain bodies, councils, or assemblies, to instruct the king of their needs, to denounce to him abuses, and to express to him legally their *grievances* and *very humble* remonstrations.¹¹⁵

Jean-Yves Pranchère depicts Maistre as the heir of Jean Bodin (1530–96), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–94), and the physiocrats, a thinker for whom “nothing is *a priori* impossible or forbidden to the sovereign: in relation to classical absolutism, the field of what can be allowed in principle to the king is immeasurably enlarged.”¹¹⁶ Yet, as the constitutional sketch above shows,

113. Ibid., 199.

114. A clause perhaps reflecting Maistre’s youthful parliamentary sympathies. See Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 4–5.

115. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 201–2.

116. Pranchère, *L’autorité contre les lumières*, 175.

the king cannot judge in civil matters, condemn to death, or inflict corporal punishment. Herein lie the seeds of Maistre's complete break with absolutism in the second phase of his thought, when he subordinates kings to the papal power of arbitration and deposition.

The idea that Europe was "the home of liberty and of true government" was at least as old as Herodotus, who contrasted Greek freedom in obedience to the law with Asian subservience to an individual's will.¹¹⁷ As for the idea of sets of "laws" expressing necessary relations between the various parts of government, or between government and governed, which then recombine to give particular constitutions, it was Montesquieu's. Book 2 of *De l'esprit des lois* attempted to understand democratic political systems by collecting evidence of the historical variations on democracy, and then showing how each of these combined fundamental democratic laws in particular ways. The assumption that law, written or not, is present in all human societies and historical periods underlay Montesquieu's analysis. In *De la souveraineté*, it converted into the belief that societies are governed above all by unwritten laws all the more pervasive, authoritative, and even divine for being unwritten—like the laws of the European constitution, "sacred and even more constitutional in that they are only written in hearts." In Europe, unwritten laws encode freedom, the active reciprocity between an inviolable king and a free people who are able to contribute to the business of government in every way unrelated to sovereignty itself—in deference to Tacitus's dictum that "servitude breeds indifference to public things." Freedom, in fact, is the "true character of the European monarchy."¹¹⁸

The European constitution is also versatile. Rather than produce a single kind of government, its six elements, "combined in different ways, produce an infinity of nuances in monarchical governments"¹¹⁹ and give rise to a multitude of real variants. Across Europe *facies non omnibus una*, as Ovid said, "their faces are not all alike," and the European monarchical constitution does not always actually yield a monarchy. In fact, if one substitutes "king" for "sovereign," the European monarchy is sometimes a republic: Maistre abandons here the Aristotelian categories of government for the *idéologue* idea of government as a set of functions and relations. The difference is that for him there is no true sovereignty in republics. These governments are instead held

117. Anthony Pagden, "Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent," in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37.

118. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 218.

119. *Ibid.*, 202.

together by a spirit of voluntary association—also, like sovereignty, divine in origin—that is their “constitutive principle. . . . Mingled more or less with sovereignty, the common basis of all governments, this *more* and this *less* make up the different *physiognomies* of nonmonarchical governments.”¹²⁰

The attribution of “more” and “less” to sovereignty responds directly to Rousseau’s argument that sovereignty, being absolute and willed by all, is not susceptible of “more” and “less.”¹²¹ Maistre agrees that sovereignty *is* absolute in that judgment may ultimately not be passed upon it. As he puts it, “There must be always, in the last analysis, an absolute power that can do evil with impunity, that will thus be *despotic* from that point of view, . . . and against which there will be no recourse but insurrection.”¹²² Yet sovereignty is non-absolute in the sense that the ruled may express opinions and exercise wills not necessarily in harmony with it, to a very variable extent determined by the temperament and especially by the spirit of association of a people. Constitutional combinations thus give rise to political plurality by leaving limits of uncertainty—that “more” and “less” denied by Rousseau, yet common to everything normative from sovereignties to human perfectibility. Within this undefined sphere, human freedom can operate to lend a constitution its particular character. This is what accounts for the irremediable uniqueness of every government, and for the incomparability even of governments with the same name. As Maistre wrote in 1814:

Each nation has its particular character, which mingles with its government and modifies it; people believe that the same name expresses the same government: that is a common error, and often a terrible one. France was a monarchy, Piedmont is a monarchy; one would nonetheless have driven both nations mad if one had undertaken to govern each of them with the principles of the other.¹²³

It was a point Montesquieu had made in chapter 2 of book 17 of *De l'esprit des lois*, and to which Rousseau had devoted chapter 7 of book 3 of *Du contrat social*. In *De la souveraineté*, Maistre inserted it into a theory of political development through time.

If one adds republics to the picture of national plurality, a duality arises. Although they express the same constitution, Europe’s republics and monarchies are antinomic. Monarchies suit all of humanity; republics do not. Less governed than monarchies, the latter are fit only, as Rousseau admits, for

120. Ibid., 219.

121. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 263.

122. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 179.

123. OC, 12:482.

peoples who are gods¹²⁴—and, Maistre adds, for *small* peoples who are gods, because, in keeping with the correlation between sovereignty and the size of the ruler, “the formation and duration of the spirit of association are difficult, in direct proportion to the number of associates.”¹²⁵ Historically, the republic is more magnificent and less stable than any other government: “In its great days, it eclipses everything, and the marvels it gives birth to seduce even the cool observer who weighs everything.”¹²⁶ But these glorious days are only rare “lightning bolts,” like everything that depends on human merit. Brilliance is also often bought with crime, because vile passions are difficult to restrain, even during good times. Justice in republics hence lacks the tranquil and impassive step with which it walks in monarchies:

Justice, in democracies, is now weak and now passionate; . . . in those governments, no head can stand up to the law’s sword. This means that the punishment of [an illustrious man] being a real enjoyment for the *plebe*, which consoles itself in this way for the inevitable superiority of the aristocracy, public opinion favors strongly these kinds of judgments; but if the guilty man is obscure, or if in general the crime does not wound the immediate interests of the majority of the people, this same opinion resists the action of justice and paralyzes it.¹²⁷

Hence republics’ reputation for national prejudice and unfairness to foreigners. Unlike monarchical freedom, however, republican tyranny is no modern phenomenon. Rather, if republics are despotic, that is because the modern European constitution has not succeeded in obliterating this aspect of their character, a necessary corollary of the spirit of association that mingles with their sovereignty. Roman history early proved no tyranny crueller than *the people’s*. Tacitus says that when Macedonia and Achaea, provinces subject to the Roman people, “asked to be relieved of the burdens weighing on them, no one could imagine anything better, to soften their fate, . . . than to give them to the prince.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Tiberius, despite all the crimes that Tacitus imputes to him, was in many ways more just than the obsequious and internecine senate. For the sullen and resentful emperor was ever disarmed

124. On Rousseau’s attitudes toward monarchies and republics in intellectual context, see Michael Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 202–21.

125. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 219–20.

126. *Ibid.*, 219.

127. *Ibid.*, 220.

128. *Ibid.*, 251.

by true merit, always attentive to indigent virtue, and scornful of prodigal patricians. The life of the common people at least was easier under him: the Roman peasant, “calmly guiding his cart, in the midst of the deepest peace, reminded his children with horror of the proconsuls and triumvirs of the republic, and was little worried by the heads of senators that fell in Rome,”¹²⁹ the heart and only city “free” in all the empire.

History making, then, is a republican prerogative. In times of vigor, the great men of republics lend to their times “inexpressible charm and interest,” and usually “there is . . . in popular governments more action, more movement, and movement is the life of history.” But history, as Maistre believed with Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), is only the cumulation of human miseries, and the nations that make it can claim no political superiority, for “unfortunately the happiness of peoples is in rest, and almost always the reader’s pleasure is founded on their sufferings.”¹³⁰ Importantly, Maistre’s critique of republics does not amount to a recommendation for their abolition. Although his ideal governments must provide tranquillity and happiness, unhappy republics have a purpose: to contribute to the world’s natural political plurality, offering (fleeting) examples of political excellence and helping us understand how the divine mind works through time.

Maistre hence differed markedly from the universalism that Kant articulated in *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), which scholars have criticized for being “not culturally neutral,” but “the bearer of processes of a homogenizing or assimilating European cultural identity.”¹³¹ To be sure, Maistre adhered, with Kant, to the potentially imperialist belief that only European constitutions contain sufficient reason to govern any nation on earth: *Du pape’s* defense of universal Roman Catholic government would rest precisely on the idea that the church possesses the rational European principle of government in greater quantities than any other human institution in history. Yet, for Maistre, this kind of universalism is ever in tension, first, with a dislike of imperialism, and second, with a commitment to political diversity that sees reason expressed through the particular in the myriad political constitutions allowed by God to exist in the real world as an expression of the all. Indeed, for all his aversion to Herder, Maistre drew closer to the cultural pluralism of *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774) than to Kant’s rationalist federalism. But where Herder aspired to encourage the egalitarian,

129. Ibid., 255.

130. Ibid., 232.

131. James Tully, “The Kantian Idea of Europe,” in Pagden, *Idea of Europe*, 339.

moral-aesthetic valuation of cultures as incommensurably truthful, Maistre wished above all to understand how Providence manifests itself across time in the world's many polities. His letters from Lausanne anxiously reiterate that "nothing is in its place," that everything has lost all meaning—what Emil Cioran (1911–95) calls the uncomprehending cry of every exile whose world has come to an end.¹³² This may be why *De la souveraineté* must rationalize the continuing government of Providence in the midst of chaos, and God's useful employment of apparent evil—imperfect republican justice included—to execute the good. It was in critiquing Rousseau that Maistre originally argued that God has endowed each nation with a special task that may be opaque to human eyes, but that fulfills, across time, the universally desirable:

Each member of these great families called *nations* has received a character, faculties, and a particular mission. Some are destined to glide silently on the road of life without letting their passage be noticed; others make noise in passing, and almost always . . . have renown in the place of happiness. Individual faculties are infinitely diversified with a divine magnificence, and the most brilliant are not the most useful; but everything serves, everything is in its place; everything belongs to the general organization, everything marches toward the end of the association.¹³³

The precise "end of the association" remains divinely mysterious. All that can certainly be said of the cosmic purpose of polities is that they all have one. But if God's exact aims cannot be discerned, his means and short-term purposes can. The last chapters of *De la souveraineté* suggest how the divine principles tacit in particular constitutions recombine, giving rise to rational patterns of national historical development resonant with early statistics.

God the Dice Caster

Believing that political plurality is divine entails abandoning all ideals of an absolute political good, repeating in the field of political history what Maistre had done against Rousseau in that of poetry, and vindicating the *fact*. Toward the end of *De la souveraineté*, having discussed the merits and disadvantages of the various types of government, Maistre wonders whether any of them is invariably better than the others: "When one asks absolutely what is the best

132. E. M. Cioran, *Anathemas and Admirations*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Quartet Books, 1992), 27.

133. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 274.

type of government, one asks a question as insoluble as it is indeterminate; or, if one prefers, it has as many good solutions as there are possible combinations in the absolute and relative positions of peoples.”¹³⁴ Political philosophy is a science not of imperatives but of realities: “The question is never to know which is the best government, but which is the people best governed according to the principles of its government?”¹³⁵

Answering this question required finding a criterion of constitutional excellence, which in France had been identified with population size at least since Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699). Describing the ideal king to the wise men of Crete, Telemachus asserted that such a king rules over a

laborious people [who], simple in its customs, accustomed to living from little, earning its living easily by the cultivation of its lands, multiplies to infinity. There is in that kingdom a numberless people, but a people healthy, vigorous, robust, that is not at all softened by voluptuousness, that is exercised in virtue, that is not in the least attached to a cowardly and delightful life, that knows how to despise death, that would like rather to die than to lose that liberty which it enjoys under a wise king applying himself to reign only to make reason reign.¹³⁶

A nation’s life, strength, virtue, and reason are told by the size of the population, “innumerable” in the case of nations governed by truly good kings. *Du contrat social* followed Rousseau’s spiritual father on this point, but, discarding the qualitative factors like liberty, robustness, and health mentioned by *Télémaque*, mathematized the argument and decreed population size to be the “most certain sign” not only of the body politic’s conservation and prosperity but of a government’s absolute worth: “The government under which . . . citizens populate and multiply the most is infallibly the best; that under which a people diminishes and dies out is the worst. Calculators, it is now your business; count, measure, compare.”¹³⁷ Maistre concurs that population size is important, but, closer to Fénelon, points out that moral strength and qualities like wealth, availability of the people, and especially health and happiness have to be taken into account.¹³⁸

134. *Ibid.*, 234.

135. *Ibid.*, 235.

136. François de Salignac de La Moth Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, ed. Jacques Le Brun (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 109.

137. Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin, La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 3:420. Quoted in Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 235.

138. *Ibid.*, 236–37.

Moreover, population qualities must be studied over time. Maistre borrows Rousseau's idea of statistical indicators, but only to apply it to qualitative factors and to introduce it into a historical model whereby nations are pushed along to a high point of population vigor and plenty. The achievement and position of this high point, in turn, do not at all depend on the type of government abstractly understood, but on the overall suitability of a particular government to the character of the nation it governs. Only nations well suited to their governments possess sufficient "force" in their institutions and customs to make good use of the circumstances in which they are placed. By the same token, only they reach a "high point" of historical and political development relative to the world's nations. All absolute qualifications of government are hence null, and even the old Aristotelian categories of "good" and "bad" governments disappear: "All the modern preceptors of revolt, from the cedar to the hyssop,¹³⁹ repeat indefatigably that despotism corrupts souls: that is another error; despotism is bad only when it is introduced into a country made for another type of government, or when it becomes corrupted in a country where it is in its place."¹⁴⁰ This latter is the case of the Turks. When Busbecq, the ambassador of Emperor Ferdinand, lived in the camps of Suleyman the Magnificent, the Turks were models of discipline and virtue, to the point that, comparing them with Europeans, Busbecq despaired of the future of Christendom. But now the Turks are weak, "and other peoples crush them because these disciples of the Qur'an have . . . schools of science, because they know French, because they organize their armies in the European style: in a word, because they are no longer Turks."¹⁴¹ Herder is again the point of comparison: he, too, assumed that each nation has an independent, separate, and internally uniform culture, endowed with a history, that is all its own.

The parameters of national historical development set, it remains to actually describe it. Maistre does this by proposing that progress results from trial and error:

Let us consult history: we will see that each nation agitates itself and fumbles around until a certain reunion of circumstances places it more precisely in the situation convenient to it: then she displays all of a sudden all her faculties at once, she shines with all kinds of brilliance, she

139. A reference to the biblical contrast (1 Kings 4:33) between the cedar, one of the tallest trees, and the hyssop, a tiny plant "that springs out of the wall," respectively symbolic of the mighty and the tiny.

140. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 270.

is all that she can be, and no one has ever seen a nation come back to this state, after having fallen away from it.

A nation's history may be summarized as its struggle through the centuries to arrive, by responding to the circumstances dealt it by God, at its optimal constitutional combination. A nation interacts blindly with chance and circumstance according to its character, until it finds the situation most expedient to it. It then deploys its particular constitutional combination to its full potential. This happens only once, for the simple reason that each nation has only one character; that the dice, cast by God, keep rolling; and that the intellectual force that once moved the nation upward tends to spend itself after a certain point; so that, geometrically, a nation's historical progress may be charted by a parabola:

The highest point for a nation is that where its intellectual force reaches its maximum at the same time as its physical force: and this point, determined by the state of the language, has never happened more than once for each nation. It is true that the point I speak of is not an indivisible point, and that it is susceptible of more and less. In this way, in order not to get lost in subtleties, if one represents the grandeur and decadence of the Roman people by a parabola, Augustus is at the peak, and his reign occupies a certain portion of the upper side of the curve; one descends on one side to Terentius and Plautus, on the other to Tacitus; there genius finishes; there barbarity begins; the strength continues along the two branches, but always diminishing; it is born with Romulus.¹⁴²

Once a nation has reached the high point of its intellectual faculties, regeneration is not possible. Rather,

nations, going through their period of degradation, may have, from time to time, certain impetuses of force and grandeur that are themselves in decreasing progression, as during ordinary times. In this way, the Roman Empire, in its decline, was great under Trajan, yet less so than under Augustus; it shone under Theodosius, but less than under Constantine; in the end, it had great moments even under the pedant Julian and under Heraclius, but the declining progression went its pace and did not change its law.¹⁴³

141. Ibid., 274.

142. Ibid., 278n.

143. Ibid.

Cogently, nations also ascend in fits and starts—like France, whose suffering under the unhappy reigns that preceded Louis XIV’s “must be categorized with those painful jolts that perfect them during their progressive periods, and push them toward the highest point of their grandeur.”¹⁴⁴ In the end, like everything human, the moral force, the vigor that propels nations along exhausts itself and loses the game against chance. Then younger, stronger nations come to assist the death of the old, usually by conquest. And the cycle is renewed. It was a way of historicizing Rousseau’s claim, in chapter 11 of book 3 of *Du contrat social*, that all nations perish, no matter how they are designed.

The political moral of the history of nations is that development proceeds through the interaction between moral forces and the circumstances—misleadingly attributed by Rousseau to accident—that are invariably arranged by God. In accordance with Maistre’s realist principle that good governments are constitutional combinations actually viable at a certain time, the parabolic curve of national progress and decline represents the sum of the possible political combinations a nation can adopt in the course of its history.

This model provides an innovative causal theory of social chance that ascribes the succession of national constitutional combinations to underlying moral “forces” from which constitutions are inseparable, both analytically and in real terms. The beginnings of the theory in the proof of divine sovereignty at first made these “forces” “national,” expressed in linguistic, intellectual, and cultural achievements. But with time Maistre came to believe that the “forces” were also at work in social groups as a whole. *De la souveraineté*, written around the time of the Vendée, intimates this already. It shows us Maistre, filled with hope, conceiving of the peasant rebellion less as a social movement than as a nation and wondering whether, if national death by conquest does not happen, “and if the most corrupted nation imaginable remains at peace within its limits, can a new nation form on the same soil, truly *other*, though it speak the same language?”¹⁴⁵

Maistre never decided this definitively, but years later extended his theory of national development to practically all social groups and especially to religions (in *Du pape*). He also discovered the historically creative power that managed circumstance to fashion expediency, originally the property of legislators and God-given sovereignties, operating in all autonomous collectivities, one of which was actually immortal. After a century and a half

144. Ibid.

145. Ibid.

of debate, the problem of origins and succession was again resolved, in an account of the historical development of political constitutions that recalled the theoretical experiments of early statistics.

★★★

Maistre's historicization of Rousseau achieved the ambition, dear to the *philosophes*, of reconciling the physical and moral sciences—but thanks to the metaphysics that those same *philosophes* had banished from human knowledge. This did not by any means imply a return to medieval theology. As a representative of Counter-Enlightenment, Maistre adhered pervasively to Helvétius's principle of utility. He maintained that only those constitutions morally made to develop through time are able to interact successfully with divine chance (or divine will, since for him the two are one), and follow their parabolic trajectory to its natural historical end. The notion of infinite constitutional combinations also did away with the Enlightenment's homogeneous political reason and the undifferentiated societies over which it reigned. History now rose out of the politically particular, which, thanks to the myriad combinations allowed by God, could take on any number of real forms. It was a reversal and a specification of Rousseau. The second *Discours* had posited inequality as the engine of a universal, hypothetical history;¹⁴⁶ Maistre's essays described precise, preordained constitutions interacting with chance to produce actual national histories.

The Maistrian history of nations erased the Newtonian dichotomy between primordial origins enveloped in divine obscurity and an atemporal, autonomously functioning mechanical order. The divine and the natural now both operated within historical time. God became a caster of dice who controlled natural laws by providing the circumstances in which they operate and combine. The phenomena of the political world were thus approached as Descartes had those of nature, by describing natural laws without understanding of primary causes—only knowledge of their existence, and systematization of their effects—being necessary to the predictive accuracy of those laws. It was a solution with atheistic potential—as Comte would not fail to realize. But for the time being the historical agency of the divine was salvaged: God continued to intervene silently, à la Newton, at the beginning of sociopolitical arrangements. And as the new fount of natural,

146. Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 197.

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE AGAINST JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

81

historical reason, he persisted in decreeing the recombination of constitutions through time.

Thus, in a return to metaphysics that would mark French thought indelibly, political philosophy and the philosophy of history were reinvested with moral and epistemological meanings that the Savoyard vicar had confessed, and that the *idéologues* had striven to forget.

CHAPTER 2

Maistrian Epistemology and Pedagogy in Historical Perspective

The *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, begun in 1809 and completed in 1816, is Maistre's lengthiest, most erudite, most satirical, and most exhaustive work. Maistre enjoyed writing it. With the boyish enthusiasm that he often brought to his intellectual labors, he proudly described his intellectual engagement with Francis Bacon (1561–1626) as a duel: “We *boxed* like two Fleet Street *toughs*, and if he tore out some of my hair, I’m also sure his wig is no longer in place.”¹ The altercation “forced,” Maistre said dramatically, “this sphinx to speak clearly.”² He was not alone in adducing so much importance to his work on Bacon. Scholars have long recognized it to be essential for understanding Maistre's epistemology and of his appraisal of modern science and Enlightenment.³ In this chapter, I build on Richard Lebrun's argument that Maistre's theory of knowledge was rationalist and innatist,⁴ as well as generally anti-Lockean. But unlike Lebrun,

1. OC, 13:178.

2. Quoted by Amédée de Margerie in Maistre, OC, 6:xxxiii.

3. Richard Lebrun translated and edited the *Examination* with this conviction. See Lebrun, introduction to Maistre, *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), x.

4. Lebrun, “Maistrian Epistemology.”

I argue that Maistre combined Platonism⁵ not only with innatist but also with empiricist and Aristotelian elements. The result was an unprecedented historical model of the acquisition and progress of knowledge across time that found practical applications in Russian educational policy.

When one considers that there were many other, more recent thinkers who could have served to refute philosophic scientism, and that Maistre, one-time senator and magistrate, says not a word about Bacon's legal career, one wonders what could have led the Savoyard to devote so much skill, time, and energy to the discredit of the English chancellor's scientific competence. Indeed the compulsion that led him to Bacon seems to have been obscure to Maistre himself: "I do not know," he confessed to Antonin Claude Dominique Just de Noailles (1777–1846), the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, "how I have found myself driven to struggle mortally with the late Chancellor Bacon."⁶

One probable explanation is the appearance, in 1799–1803, of the first French translation of Bacon's complete works by the Jacobin Antoine Lasalle (1754–1829),⁷ which Maistre used to write the *Examen* (along with an English edition published in London in 1803).⁸ A politically explosive work, Lasalle's translation took liberties with Bacon's text. It omitted all passages "bearing even the slightest religious tendency, calling them *oremus*,"⁹ and focused on the richness of the chancellor's technical language, admiring those "*abstract substantives and . . . substantives expressing action*" that, the translator maintained, translated poorly into French. In all, Lasalle believed that, thanks to his "constructive 'skepticism,'" Bacon ranked among the greatest logical geniuses of all time, including Aristotle, Pascal, Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz,¹⁰ and that the time had therefore come to present him in a new light as a precursor of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.¹¹

As might be expected, Lasalle's work provoked reactions. Revolutionists enthused, republishing, in 1804, Alexandre Deleyre's *Analyse de la philosophie*

5. On Maistre's Platonism, see Douglas Hedley, "Enigmatic Images of an Invisible World: Sacrifice, Suffering and Theodicy in Joseph de Maistre," in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, ed. Armenteros and Lebrun, 125–46.

6. OC, 13:178.

7. *Oeuvres de François Bacon, chancelier d'Angleterre* (Dijon: Frantin Imprimeur, 1799–1803).

8. Lebrun, introduction to Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, lx.

9. Marta Fattori, "Baconiana: Nuove prospettive nella ricezione e fortuna delle opere di Francis Bacon," *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 3 (2003): 411.

10. *Ibid.*, 412.

11. On Bacon as precursor of the Enlightenment, see Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 87–88; as precursor of the French Revolution, see Fattori, "Baconiana," 411.

du chancelier Bacon, avec sa vie traduite de l'anglais (1755), a classic portrait of an atheist and materialist Bacon. But religious minds throughout Europe who loved the French language and had little use for technology were incurably wounded. Jean André de Luc (1727–1817) composed *Bacon tel qu'il est; ou, Dénonciation d'une traduction françoise des oeuvres de ce philosophe par M. Ant. La Salle* (1800) as well as the *Précis de la philosophie de Bacon et des progrès qu'ont fait les sciences naturelles par ses préceptes et son exemple* (1802), the portrait of a “nonmaterialist Bacon.” Luc was a physicist, geologist, and member of the Royal Society whom Maistre read abundantly in Saint Petersburg,¹² and whose work he cited copiously and approvingly in the *Examen*.

But Maistre was ultimately persuaded that the atheist Lasalle—who had declared “he had, against his sole experience, a hundred thousand reasons not to believe in God”¹³—was the one who had really understood Bacon, and was in fact Bacon’s natural translator: “I saw the spirit of my century, and I published this translation. This is what Monsieur Lasalle could have said, and this statement would explain his enterprise.”¹⁴ The opinion of Bacon’s translator on Bacon was in fact so important to Maistre that he devoted the *Examen*’s concluding chapter to outlining it, and to pointing out its similarities with his own appraisal. To his mind, this exercise demonstrated the veracity of his conclusions, since no two people so dissimilarly inclined could have otherwise agreed on the same issues.

Russian politics in the 1810s also explains why Maistre became interested in Bacon’s epistemology. These were the years when Mikhail Speranskii, a man whom Maistre considered to be “a great partisan of Kant”¹⁵ and an instrument of the “great sect that is finishing off sovereignties,”¹⁶ rose to power. Speranskii put forward three educational proposals to which Maistre objected—the adoption of a national, science-based curriculum; the elimination of religious education from universities; and the subordination of private universities (including the Jesuit colleges) to a new system of public universities.¹⁷

When, then, Aleksei Razumovskii, the Russian minister of public instruction, asked Maistre for memoranda detailing his pedagogical views, Maistre

12. Seven of Luc’s works appear annotated in the *Registres de lecture* during the years 1805–16.

13. *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg; ou, Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 588.

14. OC, 6:514.

15. Ibid., 11:257.

16. Ibid., 11:384.

17. See Maistre, *Mémoire sur la liberté de l’enseignement public* (OC, 8), and *Cinq lettres sur l’instruction publique en Russie* (ibid.).

gladly collected these in three opuscles theoretically hostile to the reforms.¹⁸ A good education, according to Maistre, was anathema to the Kantian and Encyclopedic philosophy that inspired Speranskii. And because Bacon was, with Locke whom he inspired, the tutelary divinity of the *Encyclopédie's* educational thought, he represented, in this logic, the epistemological wellspring that must be stoppered if the sick tree was to be pulled up by the roots. The *Examen* states that “Bacon is the father of all those horrible maxims” that resulted in “the greatest and most fearsome conspiracy that has ever been formed against religion and thrones,” and that triumphed only thanks to everything that was said against religious education in the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ “To struggle mortally” with Bacon was hence a shortcut to reversing the Enlightenment’s pedagogical ravages. It was also a bulwark against the Revolution’s most dangerous strategy—destroying sovereignty by corrupting the children who are the future of nations. As Maistre warned: “Princes who will not want . . . to remember that men are only made with children will one day repent cruelly, but too late.”²⁰

Via Razumovskii and the young Sergei Uvarov, Maistre exerted a formative influence on nineteenth-century Russian educational policy. The written evidence for this is moderate: his opuscles on education, his memoranda to Razumovskii, and a half-dozen letters to Uvarov.²¹ In educational matters, Maistre relied mostly on the spoken word that he preferred to the written, and that he used charismatically in the salons of Saint Petersburg.²² The similarities between the educational policies that Razumovskii and Uvarov adopted and those that Maistre proposed, however, are too conspicuous to ignore. Their details are beyond the scope of this book. But remembering that the *Examen* had practical educational goals not only reveals the complementarity between Maistre’s epistemology and pedagogy, but also clarifies why he refuted Bacon as he did.

What has not been previously suspected, either by Maistrian scholars or by historians of Russian education, is that Maistre’s educational philosophy

18. The *Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie*, the *Observations sur le “Prospectus disciplinarum,”* and the *Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public* (all composed 1810).

19. OC, 6:459–60.

20. Ibid., 13:167.

21. The letters to Uvarov are collected in *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, State Historical Museum, Moscow, 62–82.

22. For a description of Maistre in action as a conversationalist, see Alexander Sturdza, *Oeuvres posthumes* (Paris: Dentu, 1859), 3:170–71. For S. Zikhariev’s description, see Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 305. On the interaction between the written and spoken word in Maistre’s life and work, see Armenteros, “Epilogue: The Forced Inhabitant of History,” in *The New enfant du siècle*, 99–115.

and theory of knowledge had origins in the untold story of direct empiricism in France.

On French Empiricists

The abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier (1718–90), confessor to Mesdames de France,²³ was a curious man. Attentive to his times, he was intensely conscious of the new importance of literary propaganda, of the constant and pressing need to fight books with books and learn from and about the enemy. The *philosophes* had such respect for his serious engagement with intellectual matters that the baron D’Holbach, of all people, welcomed him regularly in his salon, along with Diderot, Helvétius, and the rest, until the odd guest wrote the *Examen critique* (1770), a refutation so unmitigated of his host’s still very anonymous *Système de la nature* (1770) that benevolent deference had to yield to personal offense.²⁴ The incident was typical. Bergier always wrote in a mental state of war: he thought of theology as a fundamentally combative science, ever encircled by a “crowd of enemies” that had grown unprecedentedly large in his century.²⁵ Tirelessly pugnacious and prolific, what he lacked in depth and originality he compensated for amply with passion, exhaustiveness, eloquence, sophistication, and clarity of exposition. He became “the most prominent champion of Catholicism in the latter half of the century.”²⁶ Two popes wrote him letters of congratulations, and various European rulers presented him with their portraits in miniature. Nor did the Assemblée du clergé leave his polemical talents untapped. In 1770 it granted him a pension to enable him to write full-time against unbelievers.²⁷ Bergier appears to have earned every *liard* of it. His output was enormous. It included *Le déisme réfuté par lui-même* (1766), a thoroughgoing critique of Rousseau; a work on the primitive roots of languages, another on the logical proofs of Christianity, the section “Théologie” of the *Encyclopédie méthodique* (1788–90), and an immense, vastly popular, twelve-volume refutation of virtually all heresies and non-Catholic philosophies entitled *Traité historique et*

23. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*, 96.

24. Laurence Bongie, “Hume and Skepticism in Late Eighteenth-Century France,” in *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800: Skepticism in Philosophy, Science and Society*, ed. Johan Van der Zande and R. H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998), 19.

25. Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Dictionnaire de théologie* (Besançon: Outhenin-Chalandre fils, 1843), i.

26. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*, 46.

27. *Ibid.*, 96–97.

dogmatique de la vraie religion, avec la réfutation des erreurs qui lui ont été opposées dans les différens siècles (1780), which Maistre read enthusiastically.²⁸

Bergier, however, did not simply react to *philosophie*, but elaborated on it with the help of Hume's philosophy. No other writer in eighteenth-century France read Hume so closely or quoted him so frequently;²⁹ and even more significantly, no one (Condorcet excepted) took so great an interest in Humean epistemology. In France, Hume had owed his fame among philosophers largely to his social criticism, not to his theory of knowledge. People like Turgot, D'Holbach, and Diderot could not understand the profound moral, emotional, and psychological crisis Hume had sunk into after reading Bayle, and were unmoved by the epistemology that had resolved it. Turgot's contagious faith in the possibility of achieving indefinite scientific progress by expressing all knowledge mathematically rendered them natural strangers to a philosophy skeptical of everything including mathematics.

Condorcet was the sole exception. *Idéologie's* father took from Hume the important idea that, science being as natural to man and of the same order as reasoning based on habit, the calculation of probabilities is the rational foundation of both the moral and the physical sciences.³⁰ In *Le marquis de Condorcet à Monsieur D'Alembert sur le système du monde* (1768), Condorcet judged the understanding of a divine intelligence, cognizant of the state of all world phenomena at a given moment and of their effects at any other, far above human strength. Yet he set this very divine understanding as the goal toward which all science should strive,³¹ and to achieve it, he combined Humean skepticism and probabilism with Bernoulli's subjectification of mathematical probability.³² This was Condorcet's way of resolving the epistemological crisis that had been introduced into European philosophy by the wars of religion. With religion problematized and objectified into something to think about rather than to think with, Locke's uncertainty about

28. Approbatory references to Bergier run through Maistre's reading notes. See especially *Extraits F*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J15, 268, 117, 336, and passim. On Bergier, see Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, *L'abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, 1718–1790, Des monts Jura à Versailles, le parcours d'un apologiste du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010) and Ambroise Jobert, *Un théologien au siècle des lumières: L'abbé Bergier, correspondance avec l'abbé Trouillet, 1770–90* (Lyon: Centre André Latreille, 1987).

29. Bongie, "Hume and Skepticism in Late Eighteenth-Century France," 19.

30. Baker, *Condorcet*, 137–60.

31. *Ibid.*, 104–6.

32. On Hume's contribution to Condorcet's social mathematics, see *ibid.*, 135–55. On Bernoulli's contribution, see *ibid.*, 156–63.

ultimate truths had seemed to many frighteningly probabilistic.³³ Descartes had provided a way out by making skeptical doubt into a means of reestablishing certain knowledge through the correct deployment of reason;³⁴ and Condorcet, in his turn, mobilized Descartes to approximate the certain through the probable.

Hume's epistemology had a similar goal. His skepticism was the obverse of scientific progressivism. The *philosophes* had inherited the Newtonian position of the Clarke-Leibniz debate, declaring truths in the physical and moral sciences to be purely contingent,³⁵ and ultimately believing demonstrative truths to be only psychologically probable.³⁶ Where Hume and most *philosophes* differed was in the means they advocated to avert the paralyzing doubts born of the observed dissonance between "the universal and necessary principles of reason" and "the particularity and contingency of experience."³⁷ Hume advocated direct empiricism or anti-Lockeanism, whereas, in leaving only Bacon, Locke, and Newton standing, the *philosophes* assumed that mediators like language and mathematics arbitrate between the world and our idea of it, and that knowledge is improved by perfecting these intermediates.

Seeking to defend the faith with fact and experience, Bergier mined what most *philosophes* discarded. As a Catholic, he could not use Locke with any semblance of orthodoxy, since Voltaire had turned the father of liberalism into a materialist, stripping him of all theological legitimacy.³⁸ And so Hume provided a way out. Hume was an atheist and Locke a pious Christian. But the former had never had the misfortune of suggesting, in a rush of devoutness, that "God in his omnipotence might choose to endow a material human mind with the ability to think";³⁹ while his direct empiricism, positing an unmediated relationship between mind and world, was free of the theologically dangerous intellectual gymnastics that were needed to turn Locke's perceptions into ideas.

Bergier found the *Essays concerning Human Understanding* (1748) intensely compelling, and became interested in the direct, emotive relations between humanity and nature that Hume described. But Bergier turned Hume upside down. The conformity of religion with human nature that Hume had

33. Susan Rosa, "Seventeenth-Century Catholic Polemic and the Rise of Cultural Rationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, 1 (1996): 88 and 106.

34. *Ibid.*, 95.

35. Baker, *Condorcet*, 180.

36. *Ibid.*, 182.

37. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 11.

38. See also Burson, *Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, 44–53.

39. *Ibid.*, 44.

deemed cause for skepticism regarding revelation, the learned abbé found a reason for belief. The result was that he devised, out of the *Essay upon Miracles*, a naturalist defense of the faith against Enlightenment atheism. Bergier argued that the fact that miracles are on a par with natural phenomena renders them not more, but equally, doubtful as everything else (including the *philosophes'* mathematics),⁴⁰ so that in the final analysis faith is the only guarantee of knowledge. Hume's principles thus served to transform his own history of religion: where his primeval man imagines a supernatural realm that gradually disappears with time, Bergier's supernatural is a historical constant.

Condorcet inverted Hume through a similar logical move, turning his observation that reason and nature are disparate and all knowledge uncertain into a method for nearing rational certainty through knowledge of nature. The difference, of course, was that Bergier used Hume not only to reconcile reason and nature but also to make both consistent with revelation. In this respect, Bergier did for Catholicism what Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) did for Pietism, using Hume's point “that commonsense beliefs are indemonstrable . . . to show that they enjoy an immediate certainty that does not require demonstration.”⁴¹ But Bergier found Humean philosophy congenial with Catholicism for additional reasons. Hume's insistence that philosophy be not only descriptive of human nature but expressive of its passions fit like a glove on Catholic sentimentalism. And his belief that philosophy should be a practical and not an intellectual science, immediately useful in making better human beings of us, resonated with Catholic perfectibilism.

Here Maistre dredged up the bone of contention when, approving of the idea that knowledge has immediacy for us, as well as personal and emotional origins and goals, he attempted to dispel the Baconian dream of devising a method of discovery free of individual subjectivities.⁴²

Mind-World Continuity and the Rejection of Methods of Invention

The *Examen* opens by objecting to the title of Bacon's epistemological masterpiece—the *Novum organum*; or, *True Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature* (1620). The very notion of a *novum organum*, or “new instrument,” writes Maistre, signals the folly of Bacon's scientific enter-

40. Popkin, *Scepticism in the Enlightenment* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 19.

41. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 91.

42. Maistre's own references to Hume in his reading, work, and correspondence have been studied by Richard Lebrun in “Maistre et Hume,” *REM* 14 (2004): 243–62.

prise. In seeking “to *remake the human understanding* and to *present it with a new instrument*,”⁴³ Bacon overlooked the only conceivable and indivisible instrument relevant to human understanding—man himself—who, as Aristotle taught, is simply “*word* and *action*. No one can find in him more than him.” Improving the understanding in fact depends not on creating new instruments, but on making good use of those that one possesses:

If man makes bad use of his faculties, he is wrong, as he would be wrong, for example, to use a lever to pull up the lettuces in his garden; but it does not follow that the lever is bad, nor above all that it is necessary to use a *new lever*, since the kind of lever once chosen will be eternally the same, and everything comes down to more or less intrinsic force, precisely as with human intelligence. It follows that one must use the lever to good purpose.⁴⁴

Representing the process of knowledge acquisition as a form of practical self-adaptation to the world evokes empiricism. And rejecting the possibility that instruments external to the individual might mediate this adaptation calls to mind *direct* empiricism. According to Maistre, human intelligence may devise “veritable *machines* very proper to perfecting [certain] sciences” (like “differential calculus” and “the dented wheel”). Yet such machines simply help organize certain areas of knowledge and play no role in refashioning the understanding: “As for rational philosophy, it is visible that there can be no *new instrument*, as there is none for the genius of mechanical arts in general.”⁴⁵

Concomitantly, because the interaction between mind and world is subject to human will and judgment (i.e., the right choice and purposeful use of the lever), empiricism is in tension with the idea that knowledge is humanly produced:

Maistre’s argument that natural causes or laws are hypothetical relations provided by the mind to account for observed (and also unobserved) regularities, is an important advance on Hume’s argument that such relations are *induced* in the mind by experience or constant conjunction. . . . Maistre argues that hypotheses are positive *contributions* of the mind which make explanation possible, and that hypotheses are made by intuition rather than by following a set of rules. Such conclusions were bold and novel at the beginning of the 19th century.⁴⁶

43. OC, 6:1.

44. Ibid., 6:6.

45. Ibid.

46. Cited by Lebrun, introduction to Maistre, *Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon*, xxv.

Maistre tailored the passive, affective mind of Enlightenment empiricism to Stoic and Aristotelian notions of the self-moving soul. His “*human instrument*” is naturally adept at Aristotelian syllogism. Linking together facts in logical and innovative ways, the Maistrian mind creates intermediaries like calculus and the dented wheel, mathematics and the mechanical arts, in a single process of creation and assimilation. In the *Examen*, as in Hume’s and Condorcet’s philosophy, direct empiricism suggests naturalism. The difference is that here, the natural component is furnished by an Aristotelian mind adept at logic.

The unity of knowledge and mind-world continuity, however, both imply more than the relocation of humanity in nature. They reveal the universal telos. Where Bacon had claimed, with the libertines, that “*God has not created things for himself, nor for the manifestation of his perfections, but for the happiness of his creatures*,”⁴⁷ Maistre counters that “we know . . . that we have been created in the image of the great Being,”⁴⁸ that “all mind is similar to God,”⁴⁹ and that, as Malebranche declared, “*God has no other ends for his operations than himself; that the contrary is not possible; that this is the notion common to every man capable of some reflection, and of which Scripture does not permit any doubt*.”⁵⁰ The divine mind has created minds and world in order that Creation might know and celebrate God’s glory—a theocentrist counterpart to Descartes’ Stoic and anthropocentric recommendation that man know nature in order to know his place in it and act morally. By extension, world-knowledge becomes simultaneously human self-knowledge and knowledge of God. The “*anthropomorphist*” whom Bacon reproached for subjectively “[searching] for intention in order” Maistre esteems for following God’s prescriptions “*to resemble him in his perfections*,”⁵¹ for contributing to a “relationship of love and gratitude between God and man,”⁵² and for avoiding the erroneous attribution of natural phenomena to accidents, or to processes operating outside a divine order, as Rousseau had done.

This teleology of knowledge had various sources. The most obvious was Aristotle, whom Bacon tried to replace. In fact, the *Novum organum* was an attempt to render obsolete the *Organon*, or the corpus of Aristotle’s works on

47. OC, 6:447.

48. Ibid., 6:492–93.

49. Ibid., 6:428.

50. Ibid., 6:447.

51. Ibid., 6:493.

52. Ibid., 6:440n.

logic. In 1813, Maistre reread closely parts of the *Organon*—the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics*, and the *Topics*—along with the *Metaphysics* and the treatise *On the Soul*. The Aristotelian core of Maistre’s refutation of Bacon is taken from these last two works. The *Metaphysics* helped to demolish Bacon’s attribution of spontaneous motion to matter, and to propose instead that all movement in the universe originates in a single, spiritual intelligence.⁵³ Similarly, *On the Soul* provided the *Examen*’s image of the soul as divine and self-moving.⁵⁴

Maistre’s model of mind-world continuity had further precedents in Malebranche’s idealism and in the empiricism of Willem Jacob ’s Grave-sande (1688–1742), whose works Maistre kept in his first library.⁵⁵ The Dutch logician validated the empirical knowledge that Descartes had condemned to uncertainty by assuming that God establishes logical rules enabling us to know the accuracy of the rapport between things and ideas—a principle that set the stage for Humean naturalism and direct empiricism. Finally, Stoicism, Neoplatonism, and Leibnizian cosmogony provided the theological backdrop to Maistre’s empirical naturalism. The idea that “all mind is similar to God” and made to know God through nature invokes the Stoic notion of the soul as the *particula Dei*, and the Stoic and Neoplatonic pantheism according to which the universe is ordered and suffused by the *anima mundi*. Similar ideas pervaded Leibniz’s cosmology, whereby the souls inhabiting the universe possess knowledge of it according to the place they occupy within it—a theme that would recur in *Les soirées*.

Progress by Conjecture

Bacon’s “induction” is a method for apprehending the essential qualities or “forms” of things, correcting or discarding established knowledge in order to remake nature alchemically. Maistre points out that Bacon conceived of “induction” as a means to obviate conjecture, which, like Descartes, he opposed to certainty and valid scientific conclusions. Bacon maintains that “to conclude . . . after a certain number of experiences, without a contrary experience, is not to conclude, it is to conjecture.”⁵⁶ Refuting this proposition, Maistre vindicates “the art of conjecture.” Echoing James Bernoulli (1654–1705), who observed that “in [conjecture] alone consists all the wisdom of the Philosopher

53. Ibid., 6:302–6.

54. Ibid., 6:301.

55. Lebrun, introduction to Maistre, *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, xi.

56. Translated from Maistre’s quotation in *OC*, 6:26.

and the prudence of the Statesman,”⁵⁷ Maistre avers that conjecture is “the most distinctive character of the man of genius in all genres,”⁵⁸ and the epistemological foundation of science. Instead of certifying truth by comparing experiences, or by applying corrective methods, one should continuously conjecture, because conjecture—or inference, its near-equivalent—achieves certainty *in time*. Scientific progress is the product of the recurrent inferences of various minds:

There is in things a natural movement that the least observation renders visible. . . . Sciences . . . are born one of the other, by the sole force of things. It is impossible, for example, to cultivate arithmetic for a long time without having some kind of algebra, and it is impossible to have an algebra without coming to some kind of infinitesimal calculus. . . . Can one even reflect on the generation of curves without being driven to infer sizes smaller than all finite size? . . . I know absolutely nothing of differential calculus, but it must be something that has to do with these ideas and, since they have come to me so often, how could they elude professional mathematicians? It is then without any knowledge of the human mind that one attributes to this or that collection of precepts a progress that results from the very nature of things and from the movement impressed on minds.⁵⁹

Far from producing uncertain knowledge, conjecture approximates certainty by accumulating knowledge uniformly—as in Maistre’s paradox on gambling. The conjecturing mind, remembering the viable and inviable results of its inferences, develops instinctually and becomes ever more skilled at probability calculation. The difference between the paradox on gambling and the *Examen* is that in the latter, conjecture’s successful ventures are eventually stored in a collective repository of scientific knowledge accessed by succeeding generations. No critical, methodical induction or extraneous epistemological instrument of any kind is necessary to sieve the wheat from the chaff because conjecture is self-corrective. Science proceeds from the nature of knowledge: by nature truth is durable, and by nature error fails the test of time.

This theory of conjecture recalls Hume’s psychology of knowledge, which proposed that certainty is subjectively generated through probability calculation. Like Gravesande, Hume presumed the rapport between things

57. Jacob Bernoulli, *Ars conjectandi, opus posthumum. Accedit Tractatus de seriebus infinitis, et epistola gallice scripta de ludo pilae reticularis* (Basel: Thurneysen, 1713), 213.

58. *OC*, 6:27.

59. *Ibid.*, 6:67.

and ideas to be measurable; and like Bacon, Descartes, and Locke, he supposed true knowledge to be defined by certainty. Hume further distinguished between knowledge, “*that evidence, which arises from the comparison of ideas*”; *proofs*, “those arguments which are deriv’d from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty”; and *probabilities*, “that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty.”⁶⁰ Hume’s predecessors would have been familiar with these definitions. Their novelty lay in that Hume discussed the certainty associated with knowledge in solely psychological terms. Measuring certainty by feeling, he transferred intuition from its Lockean position as a step on the way to the establishment of certainty, to new status as a necessary quality of certainty itself. Thus while the imagination combined ideas ad infinitum, experience acted as the “calm force” that drove ideas to combine on the basis of their resemblance, their continuity in time and space, and their apparent interrelationships of causality. The knowledge acquired in this way was then preserved by intuition.

Subjective, cumulative, and self-corrective, Maistrian conjecture resembles Hume’s empiricism. But Maistre parts ways with Hume when defining knowledge and probability. While Hume opposes probability to certainty and skeptically considers that “all knowledge degenerates into probability,” he also defines knowledge as a form of certainty acquired by comparing ideas. Maistre, by contrast, views probability as incomplete certainty, defining conjecture as “a fraction of certitude [that,] always susceptible of increase[,] can finally approach unity.”⁶¹ Cognition does not involve the comparison of ideas, and knowledge can derive not only from ideas, as with Hume, but from *facts* as well. The result is a historicist and progressivist epistemology. Operating like a series sum in calculus, Maistrian conjecture builds new knowledge on the margins of the known, filling in a field predrawn by the divine hand. Unlike Bergier and Condorcet, Maistre does not value Hume’s approximation of certainty for its power to reconcile reason, revelation, and nature, whose interactive harmony he does not contest. What instead interests Maistre about approximating certainty—or filling in the epistemological “whole”—is that it proceeds by *summation* as much as by comparison, so that, as humans draw conclusions “*from a certain number of experiences*,”⁶² knowledge expands through time. Maistre, in short, historicizes knowledge in the process of refuting Bacon, who insisted that the results of experiments

60. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 1969), 175. See also Baker, *Condorcet*, 149.

61. *OC*, 6:27.

62. *Ibid.*, 6:26.

be tested with “contrary experiments.” Maistre also renders knowledge sociological. For him, epistemological correctives are embedded in social structures, sanctioned by time, and provided by God.

On Knowledge Given and Knowledge Sold

Maistre’s direct empiricism was the complement of his epistemology: he conceived of empirical knowledge and knowledge of universals as interdependent, with the second being indispensable to the first. The *Examen* asserts that “man, in the order of discoveries, can look only for three things—a fact, a cause, or an essence.”⁶³ Particulars (facts) and universals (causes) are thus both comprised in his categories of knowledge. Over time, as the mind contributes apt hypotheses, knowledge of particulars accumulates and approaches “unity.” This “unity”—what Condorcet referred to as “divine understanding”—is complete knowledge or knowledge of universals, like the knowledge of primary or “final” causes that Maistre chides Bacon for having deemed irrelevant to scientific investigation. Importantly, knowledge of particulars is itself insufficient to attain knowledge of universals, no matter how much it accumulates. Particulars must logically relate to universals in order to be meaningful. As *Les soirées*’ count observes, echoing Aquinas, truth is “an equation between the thought of man and the known object.” If in experiencing the world humanity makes no use of its ideas, every one of which is “innate with respect to the universal from which it has its form,” “experience will be *always* solitary, and will be able to repeat itself to infinity, leaving *always* a chasm between itself and the universal.”⁶⁴ Cogently applied, by contrast, ideas shed light on the rapport between universals and particulars. So do symbols, which may reveal to the mind the link between universal and particular at certain points in time.

The particularist notion of conjecture is compatible with a definition of cognition as a divine revelation of universals, which, like conjecture, develops over time. In a passage that qualifies the confident affirmation, cited above, that knowledge progresses inevitably, cumulatively, and uniformly from discovery to discovery, Maistre describes invention as a random and infrequent event:

Inventions of all kinds are rare; they succeed each other slowly and with an apparent strangeness that deceives our weak gazes. The most important inventions, and those best suited to *console* humankind, are

63. Ibid., 6:29.

64. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 628.

due to what is called *chance*, and moreover they have distinguished centuries and peoples quite backward and individuals without culture: one can cite on this point the compass, gunpowder, printing, and the magnifying glass. Is it *legitimate induction* and *the method of exclusion* that have given us quinine, ipecacuanha, mercury, vaccines, etc.? It is superfluous to observe, regarding these gifts of chance, that they could not be subjected to any rule; there is surely no method for finding what one is not looking for.⁶⁵

In other words, “certain things are *sold* to man, and others are *given* to him” by Providence to console him for his ignorance.⁶⁶ The knowledge “*sold*” to humanity is identical with empirical knowledge of particulars, that is, with that knowledge that man must conjecture in order to acquire—or, from the perspective of mystic history, to recapture. The knowledge “*given*” to man by divine grace, by contrast, is the knowledge of universals with which man is born, but which is also obscure to him *prima facie*, in consonance with his fallen status. The nature of scientific progress intimates that while knowledge of particulars requires innate ideas to be apprehended, it also helps illuminate knowledge of universals. The interaction between universals and particulars in turn pushes science forward, occasionally but inevitably, across duration. Discoveries succeed each other inexorably, as humanity incessantly interacts with the world; but also variably, according to the will of Providence-as-accident, which reveals universals through particulars in a manner that humans cannot predict.

The Thomist, Montesquieuian, and Leibnizian doctrine that each ontological region of the universe has its own natural laws and ambit of understanding provides the cosmology that underpins this claim. The senator of *Les soirées* expresses it when imagining what his dog understands of a public execution. Although the dog sees the same things as his master—“the crowd, the sad procession, the officers of justice, the armed forces, the scaffold, the victim, the executioner, everything in a word”—he understands strictly “what he must understand in his quality of dog.” That is, he is able to recognize his master among the crowd, to position himself so as not to be trampled, and, if close to the executioner’s raised arm, to “move aside in fear that the blow might be for him; if he sees blood, he might shudder, but as he would at the butcher’s. There his knowledge will end, and all the efforts of intelligent institutors . . . will never take him beyond; the ideas of morality,

65. OC, 6:52.

66. Ibid., 6:53.

of sovereignty, of crime, of justice . . . tied to this gloomy spectacle, are null for him.”⁶⁷ In the cosmos of *Les soirées* and the *Examen*, humanity and the angels alone possess knowledge of universals.⁶⁸ Maistre believes that the day will come when, having become aware of all its own innate ideas, humanity will be pushed out of its spiritual class and onto a higher level of existence. A new age will then dawn. The model reveals a perhaps unique, or at least very rare, philosophical position: historicist nominalism.

Maistre’s psychology of knowledge acquisition is framed by this cosmology. The discoveries and inventions given by divine grace to humankind are partial unveilings of the inborn knowledge of universals it already possesses in accordance with its nature and spiritual class, but that remain unknown to it until the process of revelation begins. Cognition, then, is largely a matter of becoming aware of subconscious knowledge. Invoking the Aristotelian principle that one cannot “learn . . . but in virtue of what one knows already,”⁶⁹ Maistre describes human learning as the stirring of ideas natural to humanity: “Nothing can *give* man an idea: it can only be *awakened*; for if man (or any intelligence whatever) could receive an idea that is not natural to him, he would come out of his class, and would no longer be what he is; one could give an animal the idea of number or that of morality.”⁷⁰ Awakening, discovery, invention, and summation are the means whereby humanity apprehends the partial knowledge of universals proper to it. In time, assemblages of particulars awaken the universal ideas proper to humans—as when, for instance, a repeated experience retrieves knowledge of numbers.⁷¹

Human attainment of universals in turn poses the problem of which contributions are made by humanity, and which by God. Knowledge of particulars is partially bestowed by God, who, recombining circumstances, goads man toward new facts, which man then assimilates or disposes of in proportion to the strength and nature of his mind’s connection to the world. Knowledge of universals implies a divine endowment also, since universals are discovered through particulars, and God inscribes ideas in man. But man seeks universal knowledge also in a movement of love for God. The emotions are indispensable to the process of knowledge acquisition. As Aristotle observed, “Man pursues only what he loves, . . . *he moves like the object loved*”⁷²—even, Maistre implies, when man does not know that it is God whom he desires. Spiritual love increases the

67. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 577.

68. See especially *ibid.*, 511 and 628; and chapter 5.

69. *OC*, 6:265.

70. *Ibid.*, 6:266.

71. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, 628.

72. *OC*, 6:305.

probability of divine gifts, predisposing man to awaken to knowledge. Over time, the effects of love accumulate, like those of conjecture. As man is taught by God, he also comes to love the objects of his knowledge—the beings in the world in whom God resides, the natural details that signify God, the ideas that God has bestowed on humanity, and, through all these, God himself.

This psychology of spiritual love is meant to provide an alternative to Encyclopedic rationalism. According to Maistre, revelation leads the human mind to read within itself what the divine hand has traced there, to discover that “man is naturally Christian,” and to assert in one stroke the existence of God and the spiritual world, and the validity of Christian morality and religion.⁷³ It was a mystical refashioning of Jesuit Cartesianism. The prominent Jesuit theologian and contributor to the *Journal de Trévoux* Claude Buffier (1661–1737) followed Malebranche in giving the Cartesian *cogito* a Lockean sensationist twist: “*I think, I feel, I exist.*” This formula expressed an “interior sentiment” or “intimate sense” that, when developed by experience, became the foundational sense experience of all humanity, a veritable “common sense” enabling all to intuit certain fundamental truths—the fact that God exists, that we are free, that body and soul are substantially different yet linked, and that the material world is other than the substance that thinks in us.⁷⁴ Christian revelation could thus be naturalized.

Buffier was not alone in developing this notion of *sensus communis*. Other representatives of theological Enlightenment who thought like him included his fellow Jesuit and founder of the *Journal de Trévoux*, René-Joseph Tournemine (1661–1739); the ill-fated abbé Jean-Martin de Prades (1721–82); and his thesis president at the Sorbonne, Luke Joseph Hooke (1716–96). Maistre was probably familiar with their arguments. The scandal surrounding Prades’ thesis defense, however, contributed to transforming the Jesuits’ notion of common sense as the theological Enlightenment gave way to the Counter-Enlightenment in the latter half of the century.

The transformation consisted in the metamorphosis of *sensus communis* into the opinions that were *actually* held by the multitude. Thus redefined, *sensus communis* denoted the opposite of the “idiosyncratic sentiments” expressed by supporters of free rational inquiry. Jean-Georges Lefranc, marquis de Pompidan (1715–90), clarified this in his *Questions diverses sur l’incrédulité* (1757).⁷⁵ Making a huge, and possibly unwitting, concession to the philoso-

73. See Lebrun, “Maistrian Epistemology,” 215.

74. Burson, *Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, 48–49, 181.

75. *Ibid.*, 301.

phes, Pompignan assumed that truth is socially widespread, and falsehood isolated; so that social utility, as Helvétius maintained, is the ultimate criterion of the moral good. Maistre, who read Pompignan when he was young, also embraced this position in the *Considérations sur la France, Du pape, and De l'église gallicane* (1818). And in the *Examen*, he historicized it, presenting common sense as the consensus that arises from time and is preserved in historical communities. Thus, Maistre assured, Baconian induction was not novel, since it was “nothing other than the common sense of all centuries”;⁷⁶ while metaphysics was simply the product of the common sense of antiquity: “All motion being only an effect, ancient good sense looked for a first motor that would not itself have one, and attributed to it *autokinesis*, to avoid what is called *progress to infinity*.”⁷⁷

The fact that Maistre was the heir of a Jesuit notion of common sense that gave Descartes a Lockean color highlights the empiricist character of his epistemology. Although it is often supposed that conservative epistemology is innatist, and the *Encyclopédie*'s epistemology empiricist,⁷⁸ yet the conservatives were old friends of empiricism, and the *philosophes* were not always actual partisans of the *tabula rasa*. Keith Baker has returned Cartesian idealism to its rightful place as one of the *Encyclopédie*'s strongest shaping forces.⁷⁹ But the early conservative debt to empiricism is an unexplored field of intellectual history. A few signposts, however, exist. We have seen Bergier's attraction to Humean empiricism and its persistence in Maistrian conjecture, as well as the Lockean past of Maistre's notion of spiritual love. Maistre's particularism likewise belongs to a tradition that, opposed to Descartes' absolute, universalist reason, flowered out of sight since the seventeenth century in works on erudition and common sense, contributing to the *Encyclopédie*'s epistemology of singularity.

It was Gabriel Naudé (1600–53), Cardinal Mazarin's librarian and the author of the *Avis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (1627), the first treatise of library science, who first composed an apology of common sense deploring the Cartesian preference for science and mathematics as the essentials of a good education. In the *Apologie pour tous les grands personages qui ont esté faussement soupçonnez de magie* (1625), Naudé argued that the mind and spirit are best developed by common sense, which is in turn nurtured not by logic as Descartes believed,

76. OC, 6:32.

77. Ibid., 299n.

78. Especially since Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, (London: Random House, 1966).

79. Baker, *Condorcet*.

but by readings in the human sciences and especially in history and literature. Rather than strive to make minds conform to Descartes' universal mind, Naudé insisted, a good education should aim at forming unique and varied minds, rendered erudite through exercise on particular, differentiated knowledge.

From a similarly erudite and anti-Cartesian point of view, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) recommended, in his pedagogical treatise *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (1709), that young minds be formed by reading the great writers of antiquity. Such reading, Vico argued, imparts knowledge of real possibilities before mature judgment and logical and scientific capacities develop. It expands memory through the study of languages, and imagination through the reading of historians, poets, orators, and other writers who encourage prudence. The experience gained by such reading also trains young minds in common sense, or the art of reckoning with probability, prior to the logical reasoning that the *Logique de Port-Royal* (1662) erroneously presented as the foundation of a good education. For Vico, then, experience was a sort of biased probability, a developer of memory and practical judgment that anticipated both the Humean intuitionism reflected in Maistrian conjecture and the Rousseauian sentimentalism at the heart of much prerevolutionary Catholic religiosity. These ideas were likewise implicit in the philosophy of history of Vico's *Principi di una scienza nuova*,⁸⁰ which Maistre read.

Maistre was thus the rich heir of multiple, and once-antagonistic, notions of common sense—Cartesian and anti-Cartesian, Lockean and Humean, metaphysical and worldly. Yet he would not have had to read Vico or the Jesuits in order to share in what was, by the end of the age of Enlightenment, a widespread philosophical outlook. The rise of public opinion as a new form of truth during the 1770s–90s, for one, married the epistemology of singularity to nascent *idéologie*. The article “Opinion” in the *Encyclopédie* contrasted science, “a full and entire light, which reveals things clearly, shedding demonstrable certainty on them,” with opinion, “a feeble and imperfect light, which reveals things only by *conjecture* [emphasis added], and leaves them always in uncertainty and doubt.” This was the traditional view of opinion, traceable to Plato's distinction between the philosophical search for pure truth and the sophistic mastery of words, lies, and opinion. But by the time Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (1736–98) began to publish the *Encyclopédie méthodique* in the late 1780s, opinion was no longer a philosophical concept. It was discussed neither in the section on “Philosophie” nor in that

80. On Maistre and Vico, see Victor Nguyen, “Maistre, Vico et le retour des dieux,” *REM* 3 (1977): 243–55.

on “Logique, métaphysique, et morale.” It had become a subject of state science and accompanied the rise of moral statistics. It appeared in the section “Finances et police,” and then no longer as “Opinion,” but as “Opinion publique.” Its character had changed with its classification. Where before it was defined by “flux, subjectivity, and uncertainty,” now “universality, objectivity, and rationality” were its principal features.⁸¹

It was also in the 1770s–90s that the particularist strand of the philosophy of common sense, which had until then circulated as an undercurrent, finally earned a supporter in none other than Condillac. Believing “frivolous” propositions—tautologies like “gold is a metal”—to be useful in describing the operations of knowledge, Condillac developed a philosophy content to describe what is with the language of common sense, without recourse to systems, explanations, or hypotheses, and always in suspicion of abstraction. In epistemology he struck a pose less pious but still well expressed by Bergier’s statement of his own philosophical intentions: “We do not aspire to the glory of forging systems; we limit ourselves to exposing what God has done.”⁸² The philosophy of description and common sense was necessarily particularist; and, by comparison with Descartes’ magnificently explanatory system, disappointingly quiet and flat. But it was so voluntarily, intent on attending to the thoughts not of philosophers but of everyday people, and on finding truth in ordinary statements. To be sure, no straight line can be drawn from Naudé to Vico to Condillac to Bergier and Maistre, who does not seem to have read Naudé and had no kind words to say about Condillac.⁸³ Nor did he have much interest in public opinion, whether conjectural or rational. But he *could* invert the relationship between public opinion and conjecture, name collective conjecture common sense, and ascribe to it the same qualities of objectivity and rationality that singularists had lent to individual common sense over the past two centuries. In fact, he could do for common sense what the *Encyclopédie méthodique* was doing for public opinion.

Thus did Maistre profess innatism while plaiting together the Humean, common-sense and erudite strands of particularism that became prominent toward the end of the eighteenth century.

81. See Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 168.

82. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, 1:101.

83. Maistre criticizes Condillac copiously in his notes on the *Essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaines* (1746). See Maistre, “Extraits [critiques] de *L’essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaines* de Condillac,” *Manuscrits*, Chambéry, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J9, 651–716.

Knowledge, Society, and the Intelligence of Faith

Like Maistre, Nicolas de Malebranche (1638–1715) was a religious innatist who connected mind and world directly. His epistemology contained the probabilistic element necessary for any rational account of God's role in cognition—since pure chance must be enclosed by the probable if a divine order is to be defended. Malebranche did this by correlating mind's affinity for knowledge with its level of spiritual enlightenment. In his view (and as the *Examen* explained), revelation descends more readily on minds divinely inclined and formed by studies in the “science of man” (theology, morality, and politics) than on those steeped in “astronomy, chemistry, and almost all sciences,” areas of knowledge proper to be nothing more than the “distractions of a good man”: “The mind . . . becomes purer, more luminous, stronger, and more expansive proportionately to the increase of its union with God, because it is that [union] which makes all its perfection.”⁸⁴ Bacon's complaint that throughout the centuries science and religion have made an “ill-matched union,” and that, in his own age, “intellects” were “numbed” by the predominance of religious questions, was hence fallacious from a Maistrian and Malebranchian perspective. Far from breeding ignorance, the love of God was humanity's greatest means of knowledge.

History had proven the truth of this proposition time and again. Had Buffon, for instance, been as ardent a Christian as Linnaeus, he would have equaled and perhaps surpassed him. Instead,

he believed in his century, which believed in Bacon; he mocked the classifications of the illustrious Swede, . . . he made planets with splashes of the sun, mountains with shells, animals with molecules, and molecules with *molds*, as one makes waffles, he wrote the adventures of the universe, and to become the novelist of the globe he contradicted the sacred historian. What did he gain by this method? Haller, Spallanzani, and Bonnet laughed at his physiology; de Luc, at his geology, all the chemists at heart loathed his mineralogy; even Condillac lost patience reading the discourse [*O*]n the nature of the animals; and Buffon's ashes were not cold when universal opinion had already shelved this naturalist among the poets.⁸⁵

Rather than confuse the scientific process, as Bacon claimed, attentiveness to final causes facilitates it. Humans can attain knowledge of universals, and

84. Cited in *OC*, 6:451–52.

85. *Ibid.*, 6:407.

use this knowledge scientifically, only when they are aware of the world's intelligent order. Importantly, such awareness does not imply the complete understanding of primary causes, which God alone possesses. People can glimpse the universal only in flashes of revelation, invention, discovery—that is, intuitively, nonsystematically, and through the particular. Maistre's argument is that humanity can increase the probability of such glimpses by acknowledging final causes, or the existence of a knowledge divine and superior to that which it can fully apprehend.

This is not to say that religious belief is indispensable to science; but that it encourages science and at the very least does not interfere with it:

Let us suppose that a fervent Christian and an atheist discover at the same time the property that the tree leaf possesses to absorb a great quantity of mephitic (or nonbreathable) air, the first will say: *O Providence, I admire you and thank you*; the other will say: *It is a law of nature*. Let someone tell me the advantage of the second over the first, if only in terms of physical knowledge.⁸⁶

This vision of a Christian and an atheist contemplating nature recalls the countryside walks of Julie and Wolmar in Rousseau's *Julie* (1761), where Julie's faith enables her to experience nature with greater awareness and emotional intensity than her atheist husband. The epistemological valorization of teleology was also a favorite theme of Saint-Martin's. In *L'homme de désir*—which Maistre annotated, and acquired for his first library in 1790—the *philosophe inconnu* criticized eighteenth-century science's godless approach to nature:⁸⁷

Give the bird to the child; he will tear it to pieces, to know what is hidden in its body.

Make him plant flowers, he will tear them out each day, to see how they take root.

Men-children, you busy yourselves giving these curious cares to nature, as if you were assigned to begin Creation anew.

You neglect to study the final laws of nature, as if it were without ends, and as if wisdom, exposing it to your gazes, had not destined it to the advance of its divine work, and to the improvement of the beings that inhabit it. . . .

86. Ibid., 6:406.

87. Darcel, "Maistre's Libraries," 34.

Study why things exist, and not how they exist; you have the right to employ them for your own use, and you will never have the right to create them again.⁸⁸

Saint-Martin also critiqued the urge to refashion nature anew that pervades Baconian induction and that was often associated with the epistemology of description. Maistre differs from him only in valuing both description and teleology, and in concentrating his analysis on the scientific benefits that could result from cultivating the latter.

Maistre's psychology of science is inscribed in a historical sociology of knowledge. According to the count of *Les soirées*, "the natural and primitive state of man"⁸⁹ that Maistre reclaimed from Rousseau's second *Discours* was a "state of civilization and science" instituted—as Rousseau himself argued in the last chapter of *Du contrat social*—by religion. The *Examen* states the same point with equal emphasis: "All nations begin with theology and are founded by theology."⁹⁰ Ideas of this kind belonged also to Hume, who similarly argued, in *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), that belief in the supernatural was strongest in primitive societies. Yet where the Humean supernatural disappeared with time, Maistre's supernatural is a historical constant, like Bergier's, that generates human plurality as theocracy multiplies over time to yield a plethora of variegated human societies. The count of *Les soirées* explains that different kinds of humans have lived in different societies, different states of savagery and barbarism, and different historical times; that contrary to the *Encyclopédie*'s claims, human nature has not been always and everywhere the same; but that the "germ of life" has actually transformed and differentiated with time and among languages and nations.⁹¹ Socioreligious diversity vindicates the human diversity that Maistre famously defended in the *Considérations sur la France*, where, asserting human concreteness against the appeal of the constitution of 1795 to "Man," he wrote: "There is no *Man* in the world. In my life, I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc; I know even, thanks to Montesquieu, that *one can be Persian*: but as for *Man*, I declare that I have never met him, . . . if he exists, it is certainly without my knowledge."⁹²

88. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, *L'homme de désir*, ed. Robert Amadou (Paris: Rocher, 1994), 126.

89. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 494.

90. *OC*, 6:460.

91. See Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 494–97.

92. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 235.

The vicissitudes of plural humanities was an old theme of the history of nations. Vico's *Principi di una scienza nuova* described two different human universes: that of the postdiluvian *bestioni* who lost God's laws and humanized themselves alone; and that of God's people, ever protected and guided by the divine revelation they conserved. Bergier's *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion* likewise separated sacred from profane nations. It perceived idol worship as an oblivion of revelation that resulted from the diluvian catastrophe and from time, as humans were left to themselves and remembered, in the end, only their experiences. Yet to Vico's idea of pagan progress unaided by God, Bergier added epistemological elements freely selected from Hume. The rise of idolatry, according to Bergier, was accompanied by "restless and capricious passions" directed at physical objects, which "interrupted little by little the practices of the common cult" and replaced it with "as many divinities as there are beings in nature."⁹³ Plurality of gods was followed by plurality of religions and societies, and by dehumanization (Vico's *ricorsi*). As primitive man was led by his desires to adore material objects,⁹⁴ he lowered himself to animality: "Man, without religion, is little different from the animals; misled by his senses and by his passions, he comes even closer to their species."⁹⁵ Like Bergier, Maistre believes in the corruption of savages, and goes even further in deeming it to be beyond the help of faith.⁹⁶ Yet although savagery is unfortunate, it is natural, further evidence that "everything serves, everything is in its place," and that the world's humanities and nations each fulfill God's purposes in their own way. Plurality, however, does not mean equality, and the savages' irretrievable corruption intimates that Vico's line of demarcation is still present, dividing societies governed by belief from those ruled by idolatry. Bergier, too, had drawn that line, carefully distinguishing civilized idolaters, heirs of a truth "disfigured by the blindness and by the passions of men,"⁹⁷ from Christians, adherents of a "pure religion [that] descends in a straight line from the first man, consequently from the Creator."⁹⁸

The idea that the religious principle promotes sociability, and that revealed religion imparts a greater capacity for knowledge than natural religion, echoed Rousseau dissonantly and came to Maistre down tortuous paths via Bergier, who described "*domestic religion*" as the Savoyard vicar had done

93. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, 1:4.

94. *Ibid.*, 1:185–212.

95. *Ibid.*, 1:110.

96. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 1:143–45.

97. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, 1:12.

98. *Ibid.*, 1:14.

natural religion, that is, as a “few dogmas, a simple cult, a morality whose principles [God] had engraved in the depths of hearts,”⁹⁹ and that far from originating, like idolatry, in sensuality and the passions, stirred reason and sentiment. Yet where in Rousseau a society of equals first formed when natural men came together to preserve themselves from inclement circumstances, in Bergier, the primitive society was already hierarchical, and bonded by the adoration of God: “The domestic tradition, the practices of the daily cult, the regular march of the Universe, and the voice of conscience, came together to teach men to adore only one God. This first bond of society, added to those of rank, was sufficiently powerful to unite the diverse branches of a single family, and to form insensibly more extensive associations.”¹⁰⁰ This crucial difference aside, though, Bergier’s theory of sociability shared much with Rousseau’s. It was indebted, most generally, to Jean-Jacques’ catapulting of conscience to the forefront of philosophy, to his smuggling of metaphysics into social philosophy, and to his insistence that conscience is the master and the organizer of the social world.

Religion, according to Bergier, was abandoned as soon as human groups dispersed, the resulting ignorance, lack of reason and lack of sentiment explaining savages’ melancholy and solitary animalism. Bergier probably learned to identify religious sentiments with those noblest in human nature, and to discern in them the sources of all virtuous social action, from the Fénelonian elements of the Savoyard vicar’s profession of faith.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Bergier adhered to the Romantic religiosity of good, spontaneous, deeply felt giving that Catholic bishops, attracted by Fénelon’s and Rousseau’s sentimentalism, enthusiastically popularized on the eve of the Revolution.¹⁰² Bergier maintained, though, that “there is . . . never any other natural religion than revealed religion,”¹⁰³ and put native good sentiment to the service of revelation—rather than restricting it to natural religion as the Savoyard vicar had done.

Religion, in short, springs from feelings, forms society, and is maintained by sociability. The *Examen* agrees, but argues more specifically that religion conserves society by selecting and conveying knowledge.

99. Ibid., 1:2.

100. Ibid., 1:2–3.

101. On Rousseau’s debt to Fénelon, see Henri Gouhier, “Rousseau et Fénelon,” in *Reappraisals of Rousseau: Studies in Honour of R.A. Leigh*, ed. S. Harvey, M. Hobson, D. J. Kelley, and S. S. B. Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 288. See also Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 38, 210–11.

102. Frank Manuel, *The Changing of the Gods* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 23.

103. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, 1:93.

On the Spread of Truth and Falsehood

“In antiquity,” writes Maistre, astronomy was a “property of the priesthood.” Later, in the “middle centuries,” “astronomy remained again hidden in the temples, and finally, the day of the awakening of the sciences, the true system of the world was found by a *priest*” (Copernicus). This suggests that “there is a sacred link that unites the divine and human sciences.”¹⁰⁴ The social boundaries between sacred and scientific may shift with time, but in the end the sacred always prevails and remains indissociably linked to the scientific:

I do not say that it is necessary to begin ancient initiation anew, and turn the presidents of our academies into hierophants; but I say that all things begin again as they began, that they carry an original principle that changes according to the different characters of nations and the progressive march of the human mind, but that yet shows itself in one way or another.¹⁰⁵

Knowledge bears a moral charge that society must measure. Ideally, society, especially religious society, restrains the growth of false or immoral knowledge and encourages the transmission of true, socially constructive knowledge.

It was a subversion of a well-known argument. The English deists had divided ancient religions into “exoteric” and “esoteric” varieties. The former were crude forms of polytheism divulged to the masses, while the latter, monotheistic, were reserved for the priestly elite.¹⁰⁶ This stream of thought traversed the French Enlightenment, earning the approval of Voltaire, D’Holbach, and Condorcet, and reaching its most radical expression in the *Origine de tous les cultes* (1795) of Charles-François Dupuis (1742–1809), which contended that all established religion was a degenerate form of scientific knowledge about the universe.

Anti-Christian though these ideas were, Bergier and Maistre used them to serve the faith. In the *Examen*, religious institutions do not monopolize knowledge. But they act as its primary distributors, ensuring that it is edifying and true. They also help “[deprive science] of a certain *alkalinization* that makes it tend constantly to putrefaction”¹⁰⁷ by ceaselessly combating pride, “that vice that is the capital enemy of truth” and science’s great weakness. This necessitates concealing knowledge, precisely as Dupuis and the deists

104. OC, 6:454.

105. Ibid., 6:473.

106. Manuel, *Changing of the Gods*, 35.

107. OC, 6:472–73.

claimed had happened: “It is good that [science] be restrained within a certain circle whose diameter can scarcely be traced with precision, but which it is generally dangerous to extend without measure.”¹⁰⁸ History has proven the wisdom of this maxim: “In primitive times, we see science locked up in the temples and covered with the veils of allegory . . . because . . . *fire* cannot be given to children.”¹⁰⁹

Kept within the sanctuary, the torch of science burns with a divine flame. Seized by the uninitiated and released without, it sets the world on fire. Evocative though such images are of deist accusations of esoterism, in Maistrian thought the occultation of science by religion is not an injustice committed for the privilege of the few, or a manipulation of opinion in the interests of power. It is a means of preserving society as a whole. Although containment may at first obscure knowledge, in the end it exposes truth, as religious institutions scrutinize scientific discoveries to see which live and which die under the test. This is the limit and the extent of religion’s role, because

nothing, in fact, can suppress a truth discovered. If some obstacles delay it, soon they turn it to its own profit: history is witness to this, and if examples were lacking, the nature of the human mind would make us divine the law that is the same in the physical order, *for every obstacle that does not extinguish a force increases its power, as it accumulates it . . .*; it is infinitely useful that there be in the world a power opposed to all the innovations that seem audacious to it: if it errs, invincible truth soon dissipates the cloud. In the contrary case, infinitely more frequent than the other, it renders the greatest service to men by putting a break on the spirit of innovation that is one of the world’s greatest scourges. All authority, but especially that of the Church, must oppose itself to novelties without being frightened by the danger of delaying the discovery of a few truths, an ephemeral inconvenience completely null, compared to that of destroying institutions or received opinions.¹¹⁰

The deist and materialist idea that religious institutions distribute knowledge selectively is turned around to argue—against deism and materialism—that restraining knowledge preserves the social whole rather than select elites.

The reader may by now have been reminded of Galileo, who epitomized science’s victimization by religion after Voltaire and Louis Ferrand (1645–99) popularized dramatic accounts of his ecclesiastical trial. Aware of the de-

108. Ibid., 6:453.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid., 6:471.

Christianizing power of portraying Galileo's case as a struggle over scientific truth, Maistre retells it as a political story. The pope, he points out, had previously sponsored Copernicus and accepted the *dedicatio* of *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium* (1543), the founding text of heliocentrism. And if his successor welcomed Galileo less warmly, that was not at all because the idea that the earth revolves around the sun was offensive to the church, as Voltaire and others claimed, but because Galileo had used Copernicus's doctrine to challenge church authority, publishing it, against the censor's request, in the vernacular and suffused with inflammatory commentary.¹¹¹ So instead of confirming the deist theory that theocracy renders knowledge esoteric, Galileo's trial demonstrates that religion examines and distributes knowledge in order to protect society from disorder.

Maistrian Pedagogy

The historical theory of knowledge that informs Maistre's epistemology is implicit also in his pedagogy, and notably in the *Observations sur le Prospectus disciplinarum* (composed 1810), one of the opuscles on education that Maistre wrote against Speranskii's attempted reforms of the Russian university system. The *Observations* criticizes the Kantian and science-based education that Speranskii's protégé, the renegade Hungarian monk Ignatius Fessler (1755–1839), recently arrived in Saint Petersburg, advocated in his *Prospectus disciplinarum* (n.d.), a text proposing to teach a Catholicized mystical Masonry to the Nevskii seminarians.¹¹² Reading this work convinced Maistre that “Professor Fessler [was] either an angel or a charlatan”¹¹³ who aimed to “[knock] down . . . all the systems that the most powerful geniuses have invented until our days, as one knocks down old buildings that are useless or dangerous”; and to pick up, from the “immense shards” of this destruction, materials useful for building a new edifice composed of “the science of reason and intelligence, methodology, ontology, physiology, cosmology, theognosis, psychology, empirical anthropology, the metaphysics of customs, ethics, and legal philosophy.”¹¹⁴ All these subjects, Maistre objected (in another of his

111. Maistre relies here on Girolamo Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1772), which he annotated extensively in *Religion E*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J21, 215–21.

112. On the intrigues surrounding Fessler's professorship at the Nevskii Seminary, see OC, 11:521–23, and Alexander M. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 146. On Fessler, see also Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 201.

113. OC, 8:238.

114. *Ibid.*, 8:237.

pedagogical opuscles, the *Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie* [composed 1810]), could serve only to clutter students' brains with an "immense mass of indigestible knowledge" and factual information, "or . . . worse, [fill them] with all the vices that half-science always drags after her, without compensating them by the least advantage."¹¹⁵ In Maistre's opinion, knowledge acquired for its own sake is useless at best and most often pernicious: a good education must above all teach to "*learn how to learn*,"¹¹⁶ forming minds and characters disposed, each in its own way, to acquire knowledge and use it well. To achieve this, Maistre proposed an educational system inspired by the Jesuit model and his own childhood memories.

Of old, Maistre reminisces, education took seven years. The first three were spent studying Latin grammar. Memorization of classical texts was encouraged and rewarded with prizes, but not necessary. The fourth year instituted the study of the humanities, and with it "the reign of elegance": "The young people began . . . to be able to fly with their own wings, they were made to compose, or *amplify*, as it was said then."¹¹⁷ With "amplification" came rhetorical skill and the development of moral faculties:

The teacher chose a subject taken sometimes from religion, sometimes from moral subjects, or even from fables, and proposed it to his students. He said, for instance: *Midas obtained from the gods the grace that everything he touched would change into gold: amplify, Messieurs, the disadvantages of this mad demand*. Every young man could see them well as a whole, but each put in the degree of imagination with which he had been provided, and became accustomed to seeing an object from all possible angles. All these *amplifications* being done and given to the teacher to read, he showed his disciples with what grace and richness Ovid had treated that subject, and it was a new lesson.¹¹⁸

By studying the humanities, young minds differentiate and become erudite as Naudé and Vico recommended. In the fifth year, a student could come into his own as a writer and speaker and learn the rhetoric of his own language. Logic was taught in the sixth year, and physics in the seventh, though no one was obliged to study the latter, "so feared was it in all things to exceed the bounds of moderation."¹¹⁹

115. Ibid., 8:182.

116. Ibid., 8:181.

117. Ibid., 8:176.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid., 8:178.

“Science” in Maistre’s vocabulary meant alternately the natural sciences championed by the *Encyclopédie* and specialized knowledge of any kind, including humanistic erudition. He considered that both kinds were morally immoderate, and that nothing proved this more irrefutably than the character of science’s practitioners, often vain, morally degenerate, and politically subversive: “Science makes man lazy, unskilled in business and great enterprises, a quarreler, stubborn in his own opinions and despising other people’s, a critical observer of the government, an innovator by essence, contemptuous of authority and national dogmas, etc., etc.”¹²⁰ Like Vico before him, Maistre postponed scientific instruction to the last years of education for moral reasons. But while Vico’s pedagogical morals emphasized prudence, Maistre’s betrayed its postrevolutionary preoccupations by seeking to prevent the development of vain and rebellious characters.

Boys should receive their moral education in a religious institution: the singularity and moral strength of each individual mind results from unremitting socialization, from the solid forging of those bonds that confirm love and aid knowledge. In the religious orders of Maistre’s youth, students were not left alone even in sleep: up and down the corridor “a man of trust walked until the hour of waking, and watched over that youth as one watches over a sick man.”¹²¹ Character was built through waiting. Waiting under supervision prevents the moral degeneration that among the young often grows in solitude, delaying sensual experience and the vanity it encourages to a time of life when the capacity for moral self-mastery has developed. As Maistre put it, “To make a young man wait is to save him.”¹²² It is not, then, that religious institutions hoard knowledge, as deism presumed; but that they impart it gradually so as to produce unique human beings adept at both learning and moral action. Aristotle is the *Examen*’s hero; but when it comes to education, Plato is Maistre’s inspiration. In 1809, the year that he began composing his pedagogical opuscles, he was noting down *The Laws*, and capitalized the passage where the Athenian Stranger states that “man . . . is a tame or civilized animal; nevertheless, he requires proper instruction . . . , and then of all animals he becomes the most divine and most civilized; but if he be insufficiently or ill educated, he is the most savage of earthly creatures.”¹²³

Like young men, young women were to be educated with a view to their moral roles in society. If Maistre thought little of science—in the dual sense

120. Ibid., 8:165.

121. Ibid., 8:192.

122. Ibid.

123. Plato, *The Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu//Plato/laws.html>.

of the natural sciences and specialized knowledge—for men, he believed it was of no use in the least to women. In fact, women's contribution to mores rendered the moderate study of Latin, literature, music, morality, religion, and the domestic arts most appropriate for them. In female education, Maistre tended to follow the prescriptions of Fénelon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1687), which emphasized practicality and distrusted intellectualization. Anything else could be unfortunate, as the case of Madame de Staël verified. For although Maistre harbored great respect and even affection for “science in petticoat,” as he jokingly referred to her, he also wrote that she was the most “completely perverted head” he had ever encountered, and he attributed her “perversion” to the “infallible operation of modern philosophy on any woman.”¹²⁴ His letters to his daughters Adèle and Constance also disclose a constant preoccupation that they be cultured, but not, as science was to his mind, pedantically so, nor with too much fondness for philosophical rationalism. He therefore encouraged, instructed, and guided them through their reading of Tasso, Alfieri, Ariosto, and Augustine, and in their studies of Virgilian Latin; but he entreated them not to apply themselves excessively and to remember, with Madame de Sévigné, that it is “*bella cosa far niente*.” “Taste and instruction,” Maistre wrote Adèle, echoing La Bruyère, is “the domain of women,” and they should keep to it, lest they succumb to “the greatest defect for a woman, . . . *being a man*.”¹²⁵

Maistre's pedagogy assumes that individual interests and social needs are naturally and harmoniously aligned. Educating women in the humanities helps prepare them for their role as mothers. Women, writes Maistre to Constance, may write books if they like; but the task proper to their sex is far more important than composition: “It is upon the knees [of women] that grows what is the most excellent thing in this world, *a good man, and a good woman*.”¹²⁶ A stranger to the “degraded genius” that destroyed European civilization, the good woman cultivates her intelligence with moderation,¹²⁷ such that a female life well lived is the antithesis of Revolution.

Observing a natural consonance between individual happiness and social interests, Maistre deems that institutions play a central role in a good pedagogy. This belief sets his educational philosophy against those of the Enlightenment. Locke had omitted institutions completely from his two

124. OC, 9:443–44.

125. Ibid., 9:200, 303.

126. Ibid., 11:143.

127. OC 3:64.

educational treatises, *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693) and *Conduct of the Understanding* (1706), in Puritanical persuasion that institutions oppress the individual and restrict his development. Confidence in institutions similarly divided Maistre from Rousseau, the other great educational philosopher of the Enlightenment, although for more complex reasons. Maistre believed that the civilized values—rationality, conscious reflection, scholarship, discipline, authority—that institutions transmit, and from which Rousseau sought to shield Émile in an effort to foster the unique child, create original, diverse, self-controlled, and free human beings. At the same time, Maistre’s “amplification”—best done in an institutional context—also encouraged the development of intuition, spontaneity, imagination, freedom—all the values that Rousseau had thought essential to Émile’s education. In fact, Maistre reproached *Émile* for not imparting the very values and sentiment it vaunted and for being, after all, the consummate pedagogical achievement of philosophy, which “from Epictetus to the bishop of Weimar” “dries out the heart, and when it has rendered a man callous, . . . thinks it has made a sage.”¹²⁸

In Maistrian pedagogy, the reason of institutions, especially religious institutions, upholds truth across time. History can attest that the most religious societies are also the most knowledgeable and civilized. Asia, keeper of humanity’s first religion, once enjoyed “ancient prerogatives”¹²⁹ over knowledge. Modern Europe, land of the most divine of religions, is also the cradle of modern science. Across the centuries, Christianity, examining and distributing knowledge, has shaped loving minds prone to produce and receive knowledge. This explains Europe’s scientific supremacy. It also justifies combating the eighteenth century’s “negative” spirit: champion science though it may, it is unalterably antiscientific.

★ ★ ★

The idea that institutions, and especially religious and pedagogical institutions, are knowledge’s right examiners, containers, and transmitters became foundational to Maistre’s historical sociology, and especially to his religious account of European history. Equally significant was his belief that knowledge is generated by moving souls as they interact with the world, and that it is bestowed by sporadic gifts of divine grace. This belief shaped the historical philosophy of knowledge that infused his mystical works, and that linked his nineteenth-century posterity to that of Saint-Simon.

128. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 564.

129. *OC*, 6:461.

Divine grace, the moving soul, and corrective institutions are the three motive forces of Maistre's history of knowledge, which proceeds in irregular and contrasting patterns. There is a process of degeneration, the irresistible decline caused by sin, and the ensuing forgetfulness that renders humanity ignorant and obscure to itself. There are also the unpredictable gifts of divine grace, so thoroughly antithetical to Bacon's uniform progress, which result in the spurts and starts of discovery. Above all, though, there is the human will to recapture the fragments of divine revelation that remain ensconced in the world's traditions, and to discover the divine law engraved within the human heart, the vision of the good that every conscience knows intimately. This determination has a corollary in God's infinite will to save humanity. When combined, the divine and human wills, which always tend to reconciliation, yield a history of knowledge that is, overall, a process of inexorable advance. They are aided by the religious institutions that discard false knowledge and aid the growth of the true.

Epistemological progress, however, is not linear. Historically, the accumulation combines with its loss to produce the alternation between ages of creation and ages of dissertation—the phenomenon encapsulated by the law of alternativity. The *Considérations sur la France* had already hinted at this law when conceptualizing the Revolution as the period of critical disorder that followed the rational calm of the *ancien régime*. *De l'église gallicane* exposed the same idea more explicitly. It stated that ages of creation were times like the *grand siècle*, prolific in discoveries in literature and philosophy, when individual minds, loving God, discovered; and when religious institutions, socially respected, dispensed truth efficiently. Ages of dissertation were represented by the eighteenth century. Having lost intimacy with God, such times were unable to “exalt and direct” talents and, merely discoursing on what the past had revealed, manufactured discord and distributed falsehood.¹³⁰ These were the evil times of the science that Maistre deplored, necessary misadventures on the historical return to God. That Maistre mourned them suggests that he theorized history for the purpose of leaving it. For although he obeyed the Revolution's imperative to inhabit history, he never wavered in the conviction that most truly good lives, like most truly happy nations, are free of conflict and unremembered. This yearning for tranquillity, for atemporality and the end of time, the strongest bond between Maistre and his pre-1848 successors, was theoretically justified by his historicist epistemology, whose principles pervade his *opera magna*, and notably *Du pape*.

130. Ibid., 6:455–60.

CHAPTER 3

A Europeanist Theory of History

Du pape

Of all Maistre's works, *Du pape* (1819) is probably the one he published with the highest expectations. He hoped that it would become a classic, make the church dear even to atheists, and help launch a new era of world history by demonstrating pragmatically that if the Sermon on the Mount is a "passable moral code," it is in the general interest to maintain the religion that diffuses it; and that if dogmas are only fables, a unity of fables, feasible only under pontifical supremacy, is at least necessary to ensure public peace.¹ On the polemical level, the book aimed, first, to counter the *Considérations sur la doctrine et l'esprit de l'église orthodoxe* (1816), an anti-Catholic tract by Alexander Sturdza (1791–1854); and second, to take the ultramontanist side in the Restoration dispute over the prerogatives of the French church. It was a dispute that Maistre followed closely and wrote on inexhaustibly from 1804 onwards as he corresponded with Pierre Louis Jean Casimir de Blacas (1771–1839), adviser to the exiled Louis XVIII.² The years of epistolary sparring with this Gallican friend firm in his convictions prepared Maistre well to defend the ultramontanist cause. *Du pape's* publication created the "ultramontanist modernity within French

1. OC, 13:185.

2. See Blacas, *Joseph de Maistre et Blacas: Leur correspondance inédite et l'histoire de leur amitié, 1804–1820*, ed. Ernest Daudet (Paris: Pion, 1908).

Catholicism”³ that eventually produced the dogma of papal infallibility of 1870. For the first time, this chapter examines how, in the midst of his pro-papal combats, Maistre crafted a Europeanist theory of history intellectually grounded in Russian religious disputes of the reign of Alexander I.

Maistre’s hopes that his work would be meaningful to Christians and non-Christians alike came true in ways he could never have foreseen: Saint-Simon developed a theory of European history closely resembling it; its status as the masterpiece of “*la pensée rétrograde*” championed by Auguste Comte introduced it into the positivist canon; its ideal of European Catholic unity validated the Mennaisians’ expectation that modern enlightenment would one day constitute Europe “through an identical faith, into an identical spiritual society;”⁴ and its defense of the clergy inspired the Saint-Simonians in their own quest for a sacerdotaly.

In describing the political emergence of Europe out of the ecclesiastical institutions of Roman Christendom, *Du pape* also contributed to the literary re-Christianization campaign that followed the Terror. For if there is one historical argument to *Du pape*, it is that the pope has made Europe; that Europe was born and formed at the same time as Catholic Christianity; that the pontiff may now be laden with “unjust chains”; but that he stands on the threshold of a new age, when he will assume a leading role; and that his lay followers can help him play it by presenting him with “weapons all the more useful for having been forged in the camp of the rebellious.”⁵ These phrases acquire new meaning when considering that Maistre began writing *Du pape* in 1809, the year Napoleon kidnapped Pius VII, before imprisoning him until 1814 with the aim of forcing him to renounce his temporal sovereignty over the papal states. Napoleon was rubbing salt into fresh Catholic wounds: some years earlier, Pius’s predecessor, Pius VI, the “martyr pope,” had received similar treatment at the hands of the French revolutionary government. In this context, *Du pape*, with its fervent defense of ecclesiastical temporality, and its argument that the popes should dispense royal sovereignty during critical times, may be read as Maistre’s loyal attempt to rally behind his fragile pontiff and turn the tables on his jailers.

The book also captured a mood that Edmund Burke (1729–97) set with his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791), where he objected to Adam Smith’s argument that European society was polished by commerce. Europe,

3. Bernard Plongeron, “Affirmations et contestations du chrétien-citoyen (1789–1792),” in Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité*, 329.

4. *L’Avenir*, July 1, 1831, 150f. Quoted by Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 93.

5. OC, 13:192.

according to Burke, was given humanitarian sentiment, and freed from slavery, by the church. Other historical defenses of Christianity followed: Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* (1802) argued that Christianity is morally superior to other religions for its poetic and artistic achievements across the ages; while Saint-Simon's *Introduction aux travaux scientifiques du dix-neuvième siècle* (1807) critiqued Condorcet for overlooking the ecclesiastical contribution to European civilization. Maistre himself probably helped prepare the birth of the new religious Europeanism during his 1796 conversations with Staël. At Coppet, the two political theorists engaged in exchanges apparently as memorable for their disparate opinions as for the mutual respect that ultimately reigned between them. As Maistre reminisced in 1805:

Having read together neither in theology nor in politics, we made scenes in Switzerland to make one die of laughter, but without ever quarreling. Her father, who was alive then, was a relative and friend of people I love with all my heart, and whom I would have not, for anything in this world, wished to sadden. I therefore let the émigrés who surrounded us scream, without ever drawing my sword. I was repaid with gratitude for this moderation, such that there has always been between that family and me *peace* and *friendship*, despite the difference of banners.⁶

If Maistre's rapport with Staël started as a social coincidence, it ended with his admiration for her mind and heart. At least twice in his life he asked other people to thank her for her remembrance, and assure her of his own.⁷ And although once, toward the end of his life, he expressed impatience with her when her *Considérations sur les principaux évènements de la révolution française* (1818) was published,⁸ a reading of *De l'Allemagne* (1810)—the work of Staël's that Maistre liked best⁹—suggests that the two parted ways with ideas in common. These included the persuasion that freedom is a Christian and Germanic invention, the Voltairean notion that the English constitution is superior to that of other Germanic nations, the opinion that the submission of one people to another is unnatural, and the assumption that Christianity both transmitted ancient paganism and was theologically harmonious with it. It was an idea remarkable in a Calvinist like Staël, and that Maistre later mined at its source when reading Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721)

6. Ibid., 9:444.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 14:142–44.

9. Ibid., 14:143–44.

in 1798–99. Maistre and Staël similarly agreed that Europe was essentially Christian and applauded the continent's national diversity. Opening *De l'Allemagne*, Staël observed that Europe owes its civilization to the Latin nations Rome founded, who preserved the worldliness and institutions of Roman paganism; but that European Christianity had always existed most purely among the Germanic peoples, who bravely resisted Roman rule, and passed directly from barbarism to chivalrous Christian society.

Staël was not the only Protestant who remembered medieval Christian Europe fondly in the 1790s. In his essay *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (1799), Novalis (1772–1801), dejected by the death of the Holy Roman Empire, also celebrated the “spiritual kingdom” that Europe had been during the Middle Ages. His nostalgia neglected Europe's ecclesiastical institutions and harbored little hope for the revival of the papacy, which he considered to lay yet again in ruins after Napoleon's 1798 invasion of Rome.¹⁰ Novalis envisioned European history as a succession of eras governed by spiritual or philosophic principles that would culminate in an age of freedom dominated by belief in Christ. His historical imagery resembled that of Staël, who divided European history into four epochs of heroism, patriotism, chivalry, and liberty.¹¹

Louis de Bonald's *Réflexions sur l'intérêt général de l'Europe* (1815) was an expansion of his *De l'unité religieuse en Europe* (1806), an essay originally written for a prize competition of the Institut de France on “L'influence de la réforme de Luther sur la situation politique des différents états de l'Europe” (1805). Its central argument was that “religious and political circumstances” in contemporary Europe made religious unity unprecedentedly easy. Catholics had heeded Protestant criticisms of the church's social presence by eliminating many feasts and rituals; while Protestant ministers were preaching what was at bottom a Catholic morality. With passion exhausted, the popular states produced by Protestantism increasingly clamored for monarchy, and with it for a return to the Christian monarchism that Luther's religion had undermined. Dialogue alone was henceforth needed for Christendom to be one again. Although no evidence survives that Maistre was familiar with Bonald's Europeanist essays, the idea that Protestantism had run its course and would soon rejoin Catholicism figures prominently in *Du pape*.

These debates on Europe's political identity ran in parallel with the constitutional controversies sparked by the French Revolution. Conservatives, liberals, and socialists of the Restoration admired the English constitution

10. Novalis, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis, Werk und Forschung*, ed. Herbert Uerlings (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 572.

11. Germaine de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, ed. Simone Balayé (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1968), 71.

in emulation of the *philosophes*. They praised it for having preserved liberty and for having guaranteed to Britain world hegemony and a relatively peaceful domestic history. In regard to the constitution's actual form and its applicability outside England, though, opinions diverged considerably. Conservatives, heirs of a tradition as old as ancient Rome, tended to claim that constitutions are inscribed in the history and social structures of nations, and that no country can import a foreign constitution without doing violence to its own. Liberals and socialists, on the contrary, optimistically believed, like their radical forebears, not only that constitutions are transportable, but that they *must* be transported to defend human rights. The Empire brought the debate on constitutions to a head, as Napoleon's ambition to forge European peace with world government urgently reopened questions on the possibility of globalizing liberty.

One reason that *Du pape* has not been read in the context of Europeanist constitutional theory until now is that Maistre chose a primarily clerical context for its editing that significantly affected its final form and reception. Having tried, and failed, to persuade Chateaubriand to be the editor, Maistre submitted the manuscript to the abbé Jean-François Vuarin (1769–1843), an expert on Protestantism and an old friend from Lausanne. Worried by *Du pape's* radical ultramontanist and fearing royal censorship, Vuarin recommended that it be published quietly, in Lyon, and after thorough editing by a theologian.¹² In the end it was Guy-Marie Deplace (1772–1843) who had the learning, but above all the patience and conscientiousness, to take up the enormous task of turning the inflammatory text of *Du pape* into a publishable work. Judging from Maistre's grateful letters to him, Deplace made substantial contributions to the book's tone and content, deftly moderating the one and attenuating the excesses of the other (like the initial condemnation of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet [1627–1704] for Jansenism).¹³ A vast knowledge of Jansenism and a keen interest in Molinism, whose spread through France he observed happily,¹⁴ made Deplace an ideal contributor to the nineteenth century's first Pelagian philosophy of Catholic government.

What he probably did not realize was that he was putting the last touches to the first Europeanist work to emerge from the sectarian debates that accompanied the Russian search for a *juste milieu* between Revolution and

12. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 336.

13. Camille Latreille, "Bossuet et Joseph de Maistre," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 12 (1905): 257–59.

14. Camille Latreille, "Joseph de Maistre et le jansénisme," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 15 (1908): 415.

Reaction. For *Du pape* had been abundantly fed not only by anti-Gallican passions but also by the fires of religious controversy that burned in the Saint Petersburg where it was composed. Its idealization of the France of a bygone age amply intimates this.

French Leadership, or Roman Religion as the European Spirit

Maistre opens *Du pape* by declaring that “truth needs France,” and that he hopes “France will once again read [him] with kindness.” Ever since he composed the *Trois fragments sur la France* (1794), he was firmly convinced that if the Revolution had been made with books, it was in France, the land “destined to exercise over all the parts of Europe the same supremacy that Europe exercises over the other lands of the universe,” where it was most important to win the war of books.¹⁵ As he reflected in “La réputation des livres ne dépend point de leur mérite” (1795), the fifth of the *Six paradoxes*, it is powerful nations, and especially France and England, that give books their reputations.¹⁶ Indeed, France enjoyed a veritable “empire” over European taste and opinion, because, Maistre explained, “the art of saying what one must when one must belongs only to the French,” and France is “a nation made to reign over opinion by its writings.”¹⁷

Du pape’s “Discours préliminaire” traced this French literary supremacy to France’s primeval guardianship of European religion. The old Roman spirit that Cicero defined as “religion and the fear of the gods” harmonized readily with Druidism—once stripped of its “errors and ferocity” by Christianity to become the essence of an “extraordinary nation” destined to play a leading role among its neighbors and to institute the church in the world.¹⁸ Primordially ensured by religion, France’s European leadership has since extended to politics, customs, morality, and the intellect—in short to everything spiritual and historically determinative. Modern and medieval France is the successor of ancient Rome, which conquered and unified Europe first because it, too, was above all religious. Historically, Rome’s religious essence, pagan and Christian, has formed a French expansiveness characterized by the genius for inventing nothing yet teaching everything, propagating European civilization and setting the fashion in every century. Symbolically—and tellingly—

15. Maistre, “Trois fragments sur la France,” in *Joseph de Maistre: Écrits sur la révolution*, 72.

16. *OC*, 7:324–47.

17. *Ibid.*, 7:75.

18. Maistre, *Du pape*, ed. Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 20.

when the French people emulated their Roman ancestors in conquering the Orient, the name by which they were known there became synonymous with “European.”¹⁹

Maistre divided Europe, like Staël, into the Germanic nations, and the nations born of the former Roman provinces. But Maistre was fonder of Rome’s heirs. Staël, exiled, censored, intellectually and religiously alienated from her country, without—as she remarked bitterly in the preface to *De l’Allemagne*—the benefit of the slightest consideration of her father’s service by Bonaparte’s government,²⁰ found French and, by extension, Latin civilization oppressive. She considered that France, too corrupted by Rome, had forgotten the humane Christian chivalry of medieval times and instituted, after the *régence*, a reign of “inane self-conceit, immorality, and incredulity”²¹ particularly deleterious to women—a possible reflection of the painful end of her relationship with the inconstant Benjamin Constant (1767–1830). France, to her mind, had been civilized for too long and was for that reason *not* the beating heart of Europe. It was in Protestant Germany and its literature that she found relief from her suffering and hope for a regenerated continent.

Maistre, by contrast, was not only a Catholic and a Francophile esteemed by both Bonaparte and Louis XVIII whose native Savoie had always looked to France for intellectual leadership. He was further motivated in his love of France by the alliance that bound the kings of Piedmont-Sardinia to the Bourbons. “Come Clotilde,” Maistre told the new queen in the *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III*, “come embellish the court of my king; come mingle the blood of HENRY IV to that of VICTOR; tighten more the knots that unite us to France; they will never be sufficiently multiplied.”²² His sense of the parentage between Savoie and France remained alive decades later, when he was composing *Du pape* and hoping (in vain) that the Bourbon Restoration would restore the king of Sardinia in Savoie.²³

The Revolution, however, was proof that France had not always guarded religion well. The French kings, infected with Jansenism and Gallicanism, had not allied themselves with the clergy as intimately as they might have done. The titles of “external bishop” and “*external sovereign pontiff*” that had

19. Ibid., 21.

20. Staël, *De l’Allemagne*, 40.

21. Ibid., 71.

22. Maistre, *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III, duc de Savoie, roi de Sardaigne, de Chypre et de Jérusalem, prince de Piémont, etc.* (Chambéry, 1775), 32.

23. OC, 9:192.

been the pride of Constantine did not flatter Charlemagne's successors, so that "sophisms and criminal maneuvers" hid from the "*very Christian* king one of his most brilliant prerogatives, that of presiding (humanly) over the religious system, and of being the hereditary protector of Catholic unity."²⁴ The office that Providence had offered remained vacant: a king's goodwill is after all of no avail if he and his people are not sufficiently enlightened to exercise it wisely.

France's monarchs have now miraculously returned to power, but the revolutionary spirit is stronger with them than it was under Napoleon. "The powerful usurper" gripped the Revolution's "evil genius," and used it to his advantage. But now that "*peace and justice have embraced one another*," the destroyer is no longer afraid. Amid disorder, and the failures of temporal sovereigns, the pope alone remains uninfluenced, the one stone, unmoved by time, on which all of Christianity rests.²⁵ The "antireligious rage" has hence turned all its efforts against him, such that "it has never been more necessary to surround . . . truth . . . with all the rays of evidence."²⁶ *Du pape's* mission is to disclose the historical role of the sovereign pontiff, to tell the story of Christianity—or of Europe, since for Maistre the two are one—through the history of the popes. Hopefully France will be thereby reminded of its agelong calling, and become again the zealous defender of the faith it was once appointed to be—instead, one presumes, of the papal jailer.

Maistre's belief in France's European premiership intensified during the Napoleonic Wars, and in the course of his correspondence with Bonald. The two foremost emissaries of Francophone conservatism began an epistolary exchange in 1812, when Maistre wrote to Bonald to thank him for an approbatory mention of the *Considérations sur la France* in the *Législation primitive considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raison* (1802); and since then they had not ceased to write to one another, discovering with increasing surprise and delight the parities of mind and opinion that united them, down to a shared taste in words. As Maistre put it in a letter of July 8, 1818: "Is it possible, Monsieur, that nature has amused herself in stretching two cords as perfectly agreed as your mind and mine! It is the most rigorous unison, it is a unique phenomenon. If someday certain things are published, you will find in them even the expressions you have employed, and I will certainly not have changed anything!"²⁷ On the subject of France, Bonald

24. Maistre, *Du pape*, 22.

25. *Ibid.*, 24.

26. *Ibid.*, 26.

27. OC, 14:137.

wavered between faith and fatalism. It was he who complained to Maistre that, as he witnessed every day in the *Chambre*, the Revolution had torn away from Bonaparte's "iron hand" and ruled over France more despotically than ever.²⁸ And it was he who despaired that France was forsaking its leading role in the "meeting of sovereigns."²⁹ Conversely, Bonald lifted Maistre's own dejected spirits in 1819 by insisting that he had to "count a little on the star of France," since one could not despair of a nation that had once been saved by a shepherd girl.³⁰

Such concern that France be healthy so that Europe might be so too contrasts sharply with federalist and republican ideals of a homogeneous and homogenizing Europe. The Europe of Kant and Constant unified subjects who were "culturally undifferentiated and 'uniform'"³¹ and fulfilled identical political roles. It was a Europe true to Enlightenment absolutism, an egalitarian international polity premised on an unmediated relationship between individuals and the state. Compare Maistre's Europe, led by different nations at different historical times, intrinsically historicizing, religiously animated, culturally pluralist, and politically and intellectually dependent on the overall well-being of the nation that governs its mind. It was an ecclesiological rendition of Herder's cosmopolitan Europe. Mindful of recent French governments' treatment of the popes, *Du pape* portrays the church—against Gallican theology—as the natural moderator of European temporal sovereignties across time. Book 1, in fact, contends not only that the medieval church was politically autonomous from kings, and the ultimate judge of their politics; but that papal infallibility is the corollary of such arbitration and autonomy.

The Universal Reason of Ecclesiastical Authority

Book 1 opens by proposing that "*infallibility* in the spiritual order, and *sovereignty* in the temporal order, are two words perfectly synonymous. The one and the other express that high power that dominates all of them, from which all the others derive; that governs and is not governed, that judges and is not judged."³² Because temporal sovereignty is by nature absolute, and because the church possesses both temporal and spiritual sovereignty, its sovereignty is doubly absolute and may be termed infallible. Furthermore, because the

28. Bonald, *Lettres à Joseph de Maistre*, 96.

29. Ibid., 88.

30. Ibid., 126.

31. Tully, "Kantian Idea of Europe," 339.

32. Maistre, *Du pape*, 27.

church's subjects are spread throughout the earth, the spirit of voluntary association, possible only in small republics,³³ is unknown to it. The pope is a natural sovereign.

The idea of papal infallibility rested partly on Bodin's absolutism; but it stemmed more directly from the *Tractatus de potestate summi pontificis in rebus temporalibus* (1610) of Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621). The *Tractatus*—which Maistre duly annotated in his *Registres de lecture* of 1812, and which he referenced as a source of the notion of papal infallibility in *Du pape*³⁴—was a refutation of the argument of William Barclay (1546–1608), in *De potestate papae* (1609), against temporal papal power. To bolster pontifical temporality, Bellarmine drew on the moderate ultramontanist that André Duval (1564–1638) sustained (against the Gallicanism of Edmond Richer (1560–1631)) in *De suprema romani pontificis in ecclesiam potestate papae* (1614). Duval pointed out the advantages of Catholic monarchy over pure monarchy, observing that the former was preserved from despotism for being softened with aristocracy. For Duval, absolutism should mingle with democracy, incorporating debate to obviate tyranny.

In *Du pape*, Maistre set out to look for evidence that could help turn Duval's ideas upside down. For him, a principle had to be historically produced and certified to be proven, and the church's sovereign legitimacy resided in the fact that it grew with time. In the early church, Maistre notes, councils met frequently. Ordered mostly by Greek emperors, they were intermittent powers that took away from sovereignty that constancy of life, action, and vigilance without which it is no longer, since “for [it] there is no difference between sleep and death.”³⁵ But councils became rarer with time and retained legality only when the pope presided over them and approved their decisions. Ecclesiastical sovereignty augmented with their infrequency. This conviction that deliberative assemblies are antithetical to sovereignty found echoes in the thought of the political antagonists whose thought resembled Maistre's so closely. In *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (1814), Saint-Simon and Augustin Thierry (1795–1856) criticized the European congress system put forward by the abbé de Saint-Pierre in his *Projet de paix perpétuelle* (1713). They also predicted that the Congress of Vienna would prove futile and achieve nothing but discord, since “in every gathering of peoples as in

33. Maistre seems to have been unaware of the debate of the 1770s–1780s on the possibility of a large republic. See Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say's Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

34. Maistre, *Du pape*, 28n.

35. Ibid., 34.

every gathering of men, common institutions are needed, an organization is needed: otherwise, everything is decided by force.”³⁶

After the Revolution, then, Francophone thinkers tended to associate irenic rationality with institutionalized sovereignty, opposing them to the sheer will of political assemblies. But Maistre erased this opposition in his analysis of church government. He argued that the natural rapport between pope and council was not one of supremacy, but of identity. On this subject, he followed a *vir stupendae plane eruditionis*, “a man of simply amazing erudition,” the Oratorian theologian Louis de Thomassin (1619–95), whose *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline de l’église, touchant les bénéfices et les bénéficiers* (1678–79) was the standard manual on the history of canon law until the late nineteenth century. Quoted in *Du pape*, this book argues that “those who place [the pope] above the canons, make him their master, pretend only *that he may dispense with them*; and those who deny that he is above the canons or that he is their master only mean *that he can only dispense with them for the utility and the needs of the Church*.”³⁷ It is hence not a question of asking whether the pope is above the canons or subject to them; but of knowing that the pope fulfills and bears witness to them even when he contradicts their content. The argument was bound to resound in the Restoration, especially after the liberals revived the Gallican Articles of 1682 with the aim of dividing the ultramontanists from the remainder of the right.

This bold identification of ecclesiastical sovereign and church law differentiates spiritual infallibility from temporal absoluteness, two concepts otherwise identical in the political functions they imply. When describing the relationship between the European king and the law in his essays on Rousseau, Maistre argued precisely that European monarchs’ uniqueness lay in their ultimate obeisance to the constitution.³⁸ But the pope’s spiritual status as Christ’s vicar on earth sets him apart from other European sovereigns, making his office and person both subject to, and one with, the rule of law. Maistre had again been preceded in making these kinds of claims. As he points out, the identity of pope and church had been a theme of the epistles of Francis of Sales. And Bellarmine himself had intimated that “to speak of *the Sovereign Pontiff* is to speak of *Christianity*,”³⁹ which—as the Enlighten-

36. Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon and Augustin Thierry, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne; ou, De la nécessité et des moyens de rassembler les peuples de l’Europe en un seul corps politique, en conservant à chacun son indépendance nationale* (Paris: A. Egron/Delaunay, 1814), 23.

37. Maistre, *Du pape*, 116.

38. See especially Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 201–2.

39. Maistre, *Du pape*, 56.

ment and its heirs also argued⁴⁰—was itself responsible for what political solidarity survived on the continent.

Du pape historicizes the new political meanings that ecclesiastical unity acquired in the age of kings' return to the throne. The church it envisages is in fact an interface for the realization of God's will on earth, a medium for the intervention of the divine in the world that propels human history forward. Although developing with time, externally subject to mutability, and despite the evidence that certain historical periods might seem to provide to the contrary, the church is an ageless, eternal entity ever unchanged in its fundamental essence. Thus "it will allow itself to be obscured by the Middle Ages, because it does not wish to disturb the laws of mankind; but yet it produces throughout that time a crowd of superior men, . . . who will owe their superiority only to it. It then rises again with man, accompanies him and perfects him in all situations; differing strikingly in this, from all institutions and all human empires that have a childhood, a virility, an old age, and an end."⁴¹ Unlike the human institutions and nations fated to disappear with time, the pope-church lives forever. In history it is God's vehicle, present, like the Eucharist, always and everywhere: "One feels [the] *real presence* of the sovereign pontiff on all points of the Christian world. He is everywhere, he is mixed up in everything, he sees everything, in the same way that he is looked at from all sides."⁴²

The pope-church, in fact, incarnated the ancient conviction that the law-bound, political view of the world "was in the long—if not always in the short—run suitable for all peoples everywhere and that its cultural power was irresistible."⁴³ Given the identity Maistre posits between pope and church, papal omnipresence and omniscognizance signify the ecclesiastical suffusion of the world with reason. Over time, the church has outgrown the coercive democracy that characterized it in primitive times, perfecting itself to become a monarchy operating with the rationality and efficiency of a machine.⁴⁴ Importantly, however, temporal monarchies are suited only to the peoples among whom they grow unprompted; whereas the ecclesiastical monarchy possesses a reason so universal, and an internal structure rendered so cohesive by the peculiar nature of its monarch, that it can help govern and

40. For Rousseau's idea of the relationship between Christianity and Europe, see Pagden, "Europe," 43; for Saint-Simon and Thierry's, see *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, xi–xii.

41. Maistre, *Du pape*, 46.

42. Ibid., 61–62.

43. Pagden, "Europe," 38.

44. Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 195.

unite all peoples. Because humanity is naturally Christian, Christian government is “the only government that is convenient to men of all times and of all places.”⁴⁵ Institutionally, its law-as-reason inheres in a sort of ecclesial self-knowledge, specifically in the pope’s ability to decide when he requires counsel and when he may judge alone.⁴⁶ Papal dispensation of the canons—and of temporal sovereignty—are ecclesiastical manifestations of the European capacity for self-government, consonant with laws and insubordinate to passions, that makes of the church a natural, free, self-regulating—and therefore consummately European—mechanism.

Further, the church’s ability to bind Europe and the world with reason does not imply political absolutism. The opposite is the case. Absoluteness for Maistre denotes impregnability to condemnation but not rule by unloosed force. The church’s oligarchic structure lends it room for rational debate, while the ubiquitous pontificate constitutes an obstacle to temporal absoluteness, insofar as it prevents state monopoly of sociopolitical spaces. Moreover, through its monarchical, machinelike rationality, Maistre’s pope-church excludes the violence born of the individual will. But perhaps the deepest intricacy is that, as we shall see, this church whose government excludes voluntary association is itself the most effective generator of rational association in international politics.

Recovering the origins of these views requires a brief foray into Russian politics under Alexander I.

Tarists and Jesuits

After the Treaty of Tilsit (1807), most of the Russian nobility formed in opposition against Czar Alexander and divided into two main factions. One comprised the less rich, more urban aristocracy. The other, known as the Tarists, counted the majority of the big landowners among its members and included many of Maistre’s acquaintances—Ampheld, Serracapriola, N. A. Tolstoy, Uvarov, Volkinskii. The Tarists’ program was simple. They envisioned a Russia where the social bases of autocracy would be minimized, the serfs’ condition improved in every way short of freedom, and the way made for a society bereft of a revolutionary bourgeoisie.⁴⁷ The social vacuum left by a retreating government would then be filled with traditional values and

45. Maistre, *Du pape*, 278.

46. *Ibid.*, 38.

47. M. Stepanov, “Joseph de Maistre v Rossii,” *Literaturnoye nasledstvo* 30 (1937): 598.

communities. To revive such values, the Shishkov-Derzhavin literary group founded, in 1810, the Symposium of the Lovers of the Russian Word. Maistre attended its meetings, whose aim was to popularize Russian literature and the Russian language among a mostly Francophone aristocracy in the hope of strengthening the national culture without recourse to foreign values.⁴⁸ Effusively emotional, this kind of traditionalism was widespread in Saint Petersburg. It had an articulate exponent in Alexander Sturdza, who in his works of 1815–21 argued that the tranquillity of the state depends on the preservation of morality, extragovernmental institutions, and historical traditions.⁴⁹ Ideologically, Maistre was probably attracted to the Tarists because they were determined to prevent his nemesis Revolution and because their program for a weakened autocracy, no longer involved directly in the lives of its subjects, seemed to make possible a Europeanized Russia where sovereign power was limited by divine law, and where traditional institutions could take on their role as “makers of men.”

The Napoleonic Wars triggered a conservative debate on Russia’s true identity led by Sergei Glinka (1776–1847), Fedor Rostopchin (1763–1826), and Alexander Shishkov (1754–1841). All three of these men

sought, albeit in different ways, . . . to convince Russians that the old regime was essential to their national identity. . . . A century after Peter I’s reforms, it was implied, tsar and nobility were resuming their traditional role of leading “Holy Russia.” In response to the Enlightenment rhetoric of Napoleon, conservatives declared the Europeanized old regime of the Petersburg aristocracy to be the heir to Kiev and Muscovy, while equating *Imperator* Alexander I—the frustrated reformer, half-German and Francophone—with the pious tsars of old. In this way the conservatives launched a tradition that grew ever stronger in the last century of imperial Russia and reached its apogee after 1881: the idea that the European old regime of the eighteenth century, dressed up in Muscovite rhetoric and symbolism, represented Russia’s true identity and its special path into the future.⁵⁰

Conservatives voiced multiple conflictive views on Russia’s ideal relation to the West that raised questions on the place of liberty in Russian society and on the sustainability of serfdom. The government was cautious: the consensus

48. On the Symposium, see Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries*, 113–20.

49. *Ibid.*, 171.

50. *Ibid.*, 125.

was that the serfs would be freed eventually, as their continued subjugation was inconsistent with human rights and with Russia's status as a modern European nation. But they could be freed only after extensive and gradual reform. This view was justified by the theory of implicit constitutions, widespread throughout Europe but especially influential in Russia. This theory bolstered the claim that Russia was both European and autocratic because a Christian constitution, absolutist yet ever tending toward freedom, had been sprouting invisibly on its vast lands, destined for imperial rule since immemorial times.

Cogently, Maistre defended unwritten constitutions while in Russia. The *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (composed 1809) dismissed absolutism by conventionally praising the English constitution, but for the unconventional reason that it was the impregnable vessel of *unwilled* liberty. *Du pape* later described a constitution even more perfect than the English, unwritten in the sense of living, unwilled by any human power, nonabsolutist and freedom imparting. And Russia again provided the debate context in which this libertarian Christian constitutionalism could flourish. Some conservatives, notably Sturdza and Uvarov, suggested that the church should pave the way to emancipation through education. Sturdza's position was probably indebted to the German Pietist currents that influenced the Russian Enlightenment during the eighteenth century, and that his sister Roksandra preached at the Russian court in the 1810s. In the Pietist worldview, focused on active social cooperation, education was crucial for the individual's social and moral development, freeing her from ignorance and superstition.⁵¹ Freedom was understood in personal, spiritual, and epistemological terms. It broke naturally through social constraints, setting its own social and political boundaries regardless of the absolutist nature of the state.

Catholicizing this kind of conservatism, and giving a clerical rendition of Montesquieu's aristocratic liberalism,⁵² Maistre developed a form of antiabsolutism that saw in the church a major mediator between state and people, as well as a guarantor of peaceful and gradual reform. He went further than the Russian theorists in that he did not ascribe the state a role in Christian education. As a Catholic anxious to preserve education in an autocracy, he emphasized strongly the progressive and freedom-bestowing qualities of

51. Alexander Martin, "Die Suche nach dem *juste milieu*: Der Gedanke der Heiligen Allianz bei den Geschwistern Sturdza in Russland und Deutschland im Napoleonischen Zeitalter," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 54 (1998): 82.

52. De Dijn's term for the idea that intermediate bodies preserve liberty. See *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville*.

civil and religious society—thus prefiguring the attitudes of some of his French Catholic nineteenth-century readers. Indeed, the idea that religion constitutes civil society deeply influenced Maistre's notion of European history, as it did his *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie* (1811), where he speculated on how Russia could combine native and Western elements. Like Sturdza and Uvarov, then, Maistre concentrated on the sociology of religion. But he judged that, in Russia, spiritual power, enfeebled, could offer no balance or alternative to an absolute government whose enslavement of the serfs, as the Tarists argued, could not be brusquely abolished without inviting anarchy or rebellion. This difficulty was augmented by the fact that what little Russia knew about the West it had learned in the eighteenth century, such that its "first lessons in French . . . were blasphemies."⁵³

Yet Russia could still learn European freedom, which Maistre, like most eighteenth-century thinkers, believed to be at least somewhat compatible with absolutism. His pedagogical advocacy of the humanities and warnings against science had partly libertarian ends. But Maistre's Catholicism separated him from the Russian conservatives. Unlike them, he deemed that the rapprochement of the Greek and Latin confessions and borrowings from the West could help liberalize Russia. Also, unlike Sturdza, who advocated a close collaboration between church and state, an uncritical attitude toward the state on the part of the church,⁵⁴ and—like most Russian conservatives—state-controlled Christian education, Maistre saw both freedom and education better served by an autonomous church.

The Saint Petersburg Jesuits, to whom Maistre drew close during their encounters with the czarist administration, probably influenced Maistre's vision of the European religiopolitical order. In attempting to oblige them to incorporate Enlightenment philosophy into the curricula of their colleges, Speranskii put the Jesuits in direct conflict with the Crown, which, since their arrival in 1773, had valued them for the quiescence that their loyalty helped bring to a restless Poland, as well as for the low cost and good quality of the education they provided. On August 24, 1810, the Jesuit general, Tadeusz Brzozovskii (1749–1820), sent a note to the czar detailing the concerns of the Society of Jesus about Russia's educational future. He complained that rebellious ideas circulated at the University of Vilna, to which the Jesuit college at Polotsk was to be subordinated. He also observed that if these ideas were taught throughout the empire as Speranskii planned, they would prove

53. OC, 8:291.

54. Martin, "Die Suche nach dem *juste milieu*," 119.

far more harmful to the state than the incidental disturbances that took place from time to time in Poland and Lithuania. What was needed instead was to educate young people in the principles of patriotism, and in feelings of respect and devotion to the person of the czar. The Society, faithful and grateful to the Russian government, considered itself to be ideally equipped for this task.

A second note, sent on October 16, 1811, revealed the change of heart that the Jesuits had undergone during the previous year, probably as a result of conversations with Maistre, who began to visit them around 1810. The Society goes unmentioned in his diplomatic correspondence until March of that year, when he informs the Sardinian minister of foreign affairs that Rodolphe (Maistre's son) is taking private philosophy lessons from a Jesuit, along with the young Serracapriola and other friends from the imperial knight-guards.⁵⁵ Like Maistre's *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*, Brzozovskii's second note suggested that Catholicism and the aristocracy could help Europeanize Russia. Interestingly, all allusions to patriotism were omitted.⁵⁶ Speaking more like a Western Catholic than an Orthodox leader, Brzozovskii now thought that modernization and order might both be furthered more through rational, institutional means than via personal devotion to nations and secular rulers. The second note thus hinted at the emergence of a new, libertarian, Catholic Tarism, harmonious with Maistrian Europeanism, as well as with Maistre's increasingly rational view of the political world, which put the church forward as the instrument of the expansion of civil society, and of mediation between government and people.

Consistently with these ideas, *Du pape* contributed to the debate on Russia's Europeanization by portraying the church as the ultimate embodiment of the implicit constitution, vessel of a freedom that could be propagated anywhere in the world.

The *Respublica Christiana* versus the Mad King of Sweden

The church, writes Maistre, can be distinguished from all other sovereignties in its beginnings. It originated as no temporal power ever has—perceptibly: “Sovereignty [says Maistre], of its nature, resembles the Nile: it hides its head. Only that of the popes goes against the universal law. All its elements have been exposed that she might be visible to all eyes, *et vincat cum judicatur*.”

55. OC, 11:431.

56. Stepanov, “Joseph de Maistre v Rossii,” 599.

The crime, the act of violence that is the origin of all sovereignty, the primeval *manus* of Roman law that falls on its prey to appropriate it unjustly and that legitimates its capture only by a long possession,⁵⁷ is foreign to the history of the papacy. Being all divinity and the good, the church is always conspicuous. Indeed its sovereignty startles by its transparency. The popes clearly became kings because the Eastern Roman emperors were obviously incompetent and tyrannical; equally sensible were “the cry of the Occident that abdicates the ancient master; the new sovereignty that rises, advances, and substitutes itself to the old without tremor, without revolt, without spilling of blood, pushed by a force hidden, inexplicable, invincible, and swearing faith and fidelity until the last moment to the weak and despicable power that it was to replace.”⁵⁸ If the historical chart of nations is a parabola whose curve represents the life cycle proper to any human endeavor, that of the church is an ascending line. Here, Maistre adopted a new position on the debate that Rousseau started by asserting, in chapter 11 of book 3 of *Du contrat social*, that all nations must die.⁵⁹ In *De la souveraineté*, Maistre had agreed with Rousseau: all nations have a parabolic development that ends in demise. But in *Du pape*, he drew closer to the opinion of Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709–85), who held that, just because nations had always died in the past, they did not always have to die in the future.⁶⁰ Unlike Mably, however, Maistre envisioned an undying nation that had both existed historically and was not of this world. The earliest popes announced unwittingly that theirs was an “assisted power,”⁶¹ emerging necessarily and peacefully, even against the popes’ own will.

The history of the papacy is consistent with its origins. No pope has ever been a usurper, a conqueror, or an aggressor—a statement justifiable in detail, down to Jules II (1443–1513) and his wars. Uniquely, every single papal territory was acquired by a donation,⁶² and the popes are the only monarchs who possess in the nineteenth century the same territories that they did in the ninth. The pontiffs may certainly not have ruled irreproachably or conformed always to the abstract moral imperatives that historians presume to prescribe to them. But on the whole they have been more clement and

57. In defining sovereignty as the ability to do violence with impunity, Maistre was Pindar’s heir. On the Pindaric tradition on sovereignty, see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

58. Maistre, *Du pape*, 152.

59. Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 372–73.

60. *Ibid.*, 373.

61. Maistre, *Du pape*, 153.

62. *Ibid.*, 146.

more merciful than other rulers of their times, which is all that may be fairly determined, and all that can be asked of them as human beings.⁶³

The visibility and ease with which the church was born and acquired its territories reveals its brand of sovereignty. The popes' rationality, and their goodness on the whole superior to that of temporal kings, have made of the pontifical office a historical phenomenon that tends to come to equilibrium with the world as God ordained it. Politically, this equilibrium presupposes a state of international unity that peaked in medieval Europe. But the future could bring a universal Christian government:

The hypothesis of all the Christian sovereignties brought together by religious fraternity in a sort of universal republic, under the measured supremacy of the supreme spiritual power; this hypothesis . . . has nothing shocking about it and can even be presented to reason as superior to the institution of the Amphictyony. . . . Who knows what would have happened if theocracy, politics, and science had been able to come quietly to an equilibrium, as happens always when the elements are left to themselves, and one lets time do its work?⁶⁴

Visions of a European tribunal for the preservation of international peace went back at least to Leibniz's *De suprematu principum Germaniae* (1677)—an appeal to a permanent Senate of Christendom modeled on ecumenical councils and the abbé de Saint-Pierre's *Projet de paix perpétuelle* (1712). Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* and Saint-Simon and Thierry's *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* critiqued and revived this vision, seeking to reintegrate postrevolutionary European society by instituting a spiritual power. The new Amphictyony was also a cherished dream of Bonaparte, who wanted to see Europe agglomerated in "one and the same national body" and who regretted, at Saint Helena, that "it would have been possible to dream for the great European family of a political model such as that of the American Congress or of the Amphictyons of Greece."⁶⁵ Bonaparte's and Maistre's Amphictyonies would both have been inaugurated by an individual: in Bonaparte's case, himself; in Maistre's, the Redeemer of Europe that he awaited with Russian and German mystics—the "man of genius" who was about to reconcile religion and science, and that Saint-Amand Bazard (1791–1832) later identified with Saint-Simon. The difference between

63. Ibid., 156, 183.

64. Ibid., 194.

65. Biancamaria Fontana, "The Napoleonic Empire and the Europe of Nations," in Pagden, *Idea of Europe*, 123.

Maistre's Amphictyony and other, contemporary, secular ones was that these latter were the products of what he termed "human force," that is, of political negotiation and the will to leadership. Maistre, for whom everything human is ephemeral and destined to spend itself, and for whom monarchy is appropriate only for nations and the church, could never have imagined his Amphictyony administered durably by a lone temporal king, unaided by the church, no matter how wise his laws; but only by the Christian reason that everywhere ensures the universality and permanence of the spiritual order. Here Maistre's Europe resembled more the federation of gradually reforming republics that Kant proposed in *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795) than Napoleon's empire immediately legislated and united by himself.

This quasi-federalist ideal of Europe and the doctrine of papal reason that justified it theologically were consistent with Maistre's incipient association, in Saint Petersburg, of irrationality with temporal monarchs. To be sure, *Du pape* attributes to royal families an exceptional longevity and "instinct" for government.⁶⁶ Yet *Du pape*'s kings are also preys of passion, representatives of a mode of government unfree from the temptations of revolution and despotism, and universally to be subjected to divine authority if they are not to be wholly superseded.⁶⁷

Tarism and Speranskii's spell in power probably contributed to this attitude, but many other factors were at work as well. The epistolary quarrel with Blacas over Gallicanism incited Maistre to study closely the religious policies of Louis XIV (1638–1715) and did much to attenuate his erstwhile Voltairean admiration for the king-despot of the *grand siècle*.⁶⁸ Chapter 1 of book 2 of *De l'église gallicane* reflects on the character of the Sun King, whose pride caused him to forget that "*God alone is great*," and brought the Holy See more grief than any French sovereign since Philippe le Bel. Maistre's visit to Versailles in 1817 certainly left him with an intuition of tyranny reflective of his new views:

Louis XIV still lives in that palace: everything is full of him, and I do not even know how the fanatics of the Revolution have spared so many monuments of a king who understood so little *the rights of man*. In the room where that famous prince died, in that where he kept his council, where Colbert and Louvois gave their opinions facing Madame de Maintenon who spun, opposite the full-body portrait of Adelaide of

66. Maistre, *Du pape*, 280–84.

67. Ibid., 198.

68. See *OC*, 3:89–93.

Savoie, in the groves where Madame de Sévigné used to walk, I experienced a sort of oppression. I have nothing left to see.⁶⁹

Nor was the modern liberality of kings any reason for Maistre to ascribe rationality to them. If the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, with its denunciation of written constitutions—and therefore, implicitly, of Louis XVIII's Charter—made the French king wary of Maistre, Bonald's correspondence served only to confirm its theses, never ceasing to convey his desperation with Louis. In 1817, he exclaimed, writing to Maistre: "We are perishing to the cries of *Long live the king and the Charter!*"⁷⁰ And he added, in an impassioned passage, that the blindness of kings was a phenomenon "one hundred times more frightening" than the putative end of the world by fire from the fall of a comet on the earth. For kings were no longer the immobile suns of old that enlivened and illuminated all around them, but "vagabond stars who trouble the system of societies, and bring only, with their weaknesses or their errors, ravage and disorder."⁷¹

Bonald could have spared his ardor, because he was writing to a man who, though a monarchist, had been looking skeptically on kings for a decade. At the dawn of "the Europe of Metternich," when reason of state was well established as the European diplomatic norm, the mystical fervors of Gustav IV (1778–1837), king of Sweden, inspired in Maistre a mixture of scorn and sadness. Through Baron Kurt de Stedingk, the Swedish ambassador and one of his closest friends in Russia, Maistre was well-informed of the royal religious madness that resounded throughout Europe during the Russo-Swedish War of 1808, and that ended in the Mason king's deposition in 1809.⁷² Maistre's diplomatic correspondence recounts the origin of all the trouble in the bloody vision that Charles XI (1655–97) had in 1687 about the now terrorized Gustav, and concludes with a touch of disdain: "Your Majesty knows that Sweden is the country of ghosts, of apparitions, of miracles. He will believe what he judges appropriate; it will always be true that in present circumstances this witchery is piquant."⁷³

"Present circumstances" referred to the Austrian uprising against Napoleon, and to the Treaty of Schönbrunn that briefly resolved it by knotting

69. Maistre, *Correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre*, 374.

70. Bonald, *Lettres à Joseph de Maistre*, 110.

71. *Ibid.*, 120.

72. Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 280. On Maistre and Stedingk, see Jean Rebotton, *Études maistriennes: Nouveaux aperçus sur la famille de Maistre et sur les rapports de Joseph de Maistre avec Monsieur de Stedingk*, Bibliothèque de l'Archivum Augustanum (Aosta: SOINS, 1974).

73. OC, 11:261.

close ties between Austria and France. With all of Europe except Portugal, Sweden, Sardinia, and Sicily either ruled by France or allied with it by treaty, Maistre thought that the king of a nation still sufficiently fortunate to be free should occupy himself more usefully than in waging war against “two colossal powers of which one alone would suffice to annihilate [his nation] ten times.”⁷⁴ The episode was probably the beginning of Maistre’s reflections on kings’ inadvertent complicity in the revolutions that did away with them, and on what the church could do to moderate royal passions by implementing rational reforms. It is an indication of how the news of Gustav IV’s religious delirium affected Maistre that *Du pape* contains a mock petition addressed to the pope by the Swedish people, asking the pontiff to mediate between them and their unfortunate monarch, who reigns only for their perdition.⁷⁵

Yet nothing could have persuaded Maistre more firmly of the blindness and failings of kings than the injustices that he felt the Sardinian court had inflicted on him since the 1790s. First accused of being a Freemason and a rebel in Lausanne, he was later in constant conflict with the king’s brutal brother Charles-Felix over the administration of justice in Sardinia. The summary executions and lifelong imprisonments of the innocent poor that he witnessed on that island and that he pleaded unsuccessfully to prevent anguished him for years and infused him with a sense of guilt for which he was never able to forgive the reigning house. In addition, he was left with a salary and grade that separated him from his family for over a decade and that he considered to be far below the needs and dignity of a minister in Saint Petersburg—a situation that brought his continually strained relations with the court to a summit of acerbity.⁷⁶ His belief that he was a devoted subject who had sacrificed lucrative opportunities in the service of other monarchs out of loyalty to his king only encouraged his conviction that hereditary sovereigns can sometimes be the worst discerners of their people’s interest, and of their own.⁷⁷ With time, he became convinced that legitimate kings can prove even worse rulers than revolutionary ones, at least when it comes to rebellious peoples and times of catastrophe.⁷⁸ In the wake of Tilsit, when the need to give Greece a government became urgent, Maistre confessed to the Sardinian minister of foreign affairs that when one imagined Napoleon and the king of Sardinia as rulers of revolted Greece, respectively, Napoleon

74. Maistre, *Du pape*, 195.

75. *Ibid.*, 195–97.

76. On Maistre’s rapport with the Sardinian court, see Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 178–81.

77. See especially *OC*, 9:345; *OC*, 10:51, 54, 258, 260, 287–88.

78. *OC*, 10:470.

emerged as the more effective monarch.⁷⁹ Indeed, the latter had even moral advantages over European royals: “I know,” wrote Maistre, “everything that can be said against Bonaparte: he is a *usurper*, he is a *murderer*; but . . . he is less of a *usurper* than William of Orange, less of a *murderer* than Elizabeth of England.”⁸⁰ Toward the end of his life, having returned to Turin to fill honorary posts of inconsequence, Maistre said that if it were not for his wife, he would become a Jesuit.⁸¹ The statement was facetious but illustrated his despair with his court and the secular world in general, as well as his growing desire to cast his political lot with the earthly embodiment of the only Being worthy of eternal confidence.

In short, Maistre intended his European Amphictyony and the doctrine of papal reason that substantiated it theologically to be alternatives to the more aleatory systems of temporal rulers. The rest of *Du pape* demonstrates that he trusted ecclesiastical reason to the point of desiring to reinvent—in order to enlarge—the dispensatory functions that the church had historically exercised vis-à-vis temporal sovereignty.

The Taming of Kings

Book 2 of *Du pape* is a short treatise on the limitation of sovereignty. “Man, . . . being at once moral and corrupted, just in his intelligence, and perverse in his will, must necessarily be governed; otherwise he would be at once sociable and unsociable, and society would be simultaneously necessary and impossible.”⁸² Sovereignty is the power that leads this ambiguous creature with rules made not for this case or that man, but for all cases, all times, and all men. Human nature is such that if sovereignty is rendered necessary by human corruption, it is also made possible by the inherent justice of man, who generally intends the good every time that it is not a question of himself. Sovereignty therefore cannot willingly do evil more often than not, since that would both contradict human nature and dissolve government ipso facto. At the same time, sovereignty cannot be left to its own devices: it must always be perfected, and have some impediment devised for its excesses.

The delicate question of the permissibility of rebellion followed from these propositions. Gottfried Achenwall (1719–72), Adam Ferguson (1723–

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., 10:548.

81. OC, 14:124.

82. Maistre, *Du pape*, 129.

1816), and Kant had asked it before Maistre and, believing the people to be able to decide what they are capable of enduring, had generally sympathized with the right to rebellion.⁸³ But Maistre addresses the subject from a fresh angle. For him the vital question is not “quis iudicabit?” as it was for Kant.⁸⁴ It is rather “quomodo iudicabit?” Before assigning a judge, it is necessary to determine whether it is ever possible to judge. In the same way that sovereignty’s limits are susceptible of “more and less,” one cannot define the point at which a government becomes tyrannical and justifies rebellion against it. And even if that point really could be determined, resistance brings only evils: “History has only one cry to teach us that revolutions, begun by the wisest men, are always ended by madmen; that their authors are always their victims and that the efforts of peoples to create or increase their liberty end almost always by putting them in irons.”⁸⁵ This statement summarized chapter 2 of the *Considérations sur la France*, and repeated the ironic-Providentialist interpretation of Revolution that Saint-Martin had exposed in his *Lettre à un ami*: “How many times, in the duration of the same people, has one not seen the form of its government change, its dynasties renew themselves, and its chiefs and administrators be successively replaced by other chiefs and other administrators who fell in their turn into opprobrium and in the dust!”⁸⁶

Yet the alternative is confrontation with the unleashed tiger, its own abyss—as the case of Gustav IV demonstrated. A third choice must exist. Here Maistre follows the logic of “quis iudicabit?” but to conclusions very different from those that Enlightenment thinkers had reached. If, he reasons, it is an authority subject to the government that decides to resist, sovereignty is annihilated by that very act. Some authority external to the government may instead be able to dispense the law rather than violate it, to restrain the sovereign without resisting him and thereby destroying his sovereignty. This is precisely what the popes did throughout European history. As foreigners they could not rebel; and as representatives of divine authority, their chastisement of kings was if anything constructive of sovereignty. This is because in general dispensation strengthens the law, and violation endangers it. But papal restraint fortifies sovereignties for the additional reason that it acknowledges their authority to be divine, endowed with a legality and sacredness beyond the personal attributes of rulers and controllable only by another, superior,

83. Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 251.

84. Ibid.

85. Maistre, *Du pape*, 134.

86. Saint-Martin, *Lettre à un ami*, 68.

spiritual authority, possessing special powers for extraordinary cases.⁸⁷ This is where the French Enlightenment contradicted itself unwittingly, being at once enthusiastically constitutionalist and antipapal.⁸⁸

To the twenty-first-century reader, this argument seems anachronistic, the distinctive concern of a man who had lived through the Revolution and was ever afterward preoccupied with the prospect of political change through violence. Abstracting the idea from its immediate historical context, however, what results is a model for the achievement of political change, and of political freedom, through the application of a Christian ethic of governmental restraint. Contrary to what is often supposed of Maistre, he was not opposed to political change or freedom. But he intended that they be attained gradually, legally, and bloodlessly within the framework of existing institutions. His insistence that the Roman Catholic Church dispense sovereignty was an attempt to use Christian reason to secure political freedom in Christian societies, perpetually and regardless of historical circumstance.

Du pape argues ironically that the freedom to oppose the king that the Jansenists and the *parlements* upheld is possible exclusively through the very control of temporal authority by spiritual authority that Gallicans and Jansenists denounced as oppressive. Only if kings are subordinate to popes in times when rebellion threatens can civil society blossom, and the innocent blood spilt during revolutions be spared.

Its Europeanizing and counterrevolutionary motivations aside, *Du pape's* law of ecclesiastical restraint is rooted in the debates on right resistance that surrounded the papal interdict on Venice of 1606. At that time, Bellarmine had supported the pope against the contention of Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623) that every subject must obey his own sovereign in any and all circumstances. To guard the authority of his pontiff against Venice's threat of apostasy, and to encourage the Venetians to disobey their rulers and side with the pope, Bellarmine asserted, quite radically, the universal right to active and passive resistance to unjust laws and unjust sovereigns, secular and ecclesiastical. Bellarmine elaborated the argument for a special occasion, but it was not the first time he showed a predisposition to minimize sovereign power in the interests of protecting papal prerogatives. The *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei adversus hujus temporis hereticos* (1586–89), the early work that earned him international fame—and that Maistre annotated—assigned the Holy See a merely indirect power over temporals. Pope Sixtus V (1520–90)

87. Maistre, *Du pape*, 137.

88. *Ibid.*, 138.

almost placed the book on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* for this opinion, but died before the final condemnation; so that there remained, in the seminal Catholic text on the religious controversies of early modernity, the idea that the popes are temporal sovereigns only through other sovereigns.

Combined with the permissibility of right resistance, the idea of strictly vicarious papal sovereignty could have made for quite an antipapal political theology. But Maistre remained true to Bellarmine by overturning him, interpreting the vicarious character of ecclesiastical authority to be primarily significant for rendering the popes just authors of temporal sovereign right. History proved this. When Europe was born out of the ruins of the Occidental Roman Empire, the popes possessed “a certain competence in questions of sovereignty”⁸⁹ that was universally recognized. During the centuries of barbarian invasions, they entreated the emperor in Constantinople to come to the aid of the West, while preaching to the people, who “threw themselves in [their] arms,” patience and obedience to the emperor. But the emperor could do nothing for Italy and in fact had an interest in betraying it, since he negotiated with the barbarians, signing with them treaties whose durability depended on his noninterference. The popes were thus left as Italy’s forced, *de facto* sovereigns, ruling from Nepi to Naples, using what temporal power they had to hold back the barbarians, and generally so burdened with business that the occupant of the papal throne “[doubted] often whether he [was] a prince or a pontiff.”⁹⁰

Loyalty to a diffident emperor⁹¹ could not, however, last forever. In the end, worn out by the death and distress surrounding them, the peoples of Italy “took only their own counsel,” and the popes turned to the Carolingians, alone ready and able to offer Italy its much-needed protection.⁹² When Leo III crowned Charlemagne in 800, he acknowledged officially the birth of a new race of kings bound by divine law. By the same act, he certified that the posterity of Shem and Ham, whose maxim concerning government is “[d]o everything you like, and when we get tired of it, we will slit your throats,” who prefers “the cordon or the knife . . . to the misfortune of dying of boredom among [Europeans],” could not be part of the new Christian king-

89. Ibid., 188.

90. Ibid., 148–49.

91. Maistre forgets here that—although she referred to herself as *basileus* (“emperor”) rather than *basilissa* (“empress”)—it was Irene the Athenian (ca. 752–803) who sat on the throne of the Eastern Roman Empire at the time of Charlemagne’s crowning. The memory lapse may be intended: when he crowned Charlemagne, Leo III (750–816) considered the throne of Byzantium to be vacant, since it was occupied by a woman.

92. Maistre, *Du pape*, 150.

dom.⁹³ Europe was thus born simultaneously with the institution of a form of sovereignty limited by Christian law, and in legal revolt against the Orient. Nowhere does *Du pape*'s revolutionary character display itself more clearly. Europe emerged from rebellion and was saved by a church that planned the political future rationally. Even more, its present ills could be cured by refashioning that church—revolutionary-style—as a rational instrument of stability.

But Maistre is not content to restrain sovereignty with divine reason. He describes also the circumstances in which such restraint must be exercised, arguing that it solves a problem global in scope, and inherent in the nature of law. This is that law is ill adapted to all possible real cases; that human weakness cannot predict everything; and that the very nature of things makes some vary to the point that they “leave of their own movement the circle of the law,” while others, “disposed by insensible gradations, under common categories, cannot be seized by a general name that is not false in its nuances.”⁹⁴ Exceptional real cases—meaning political and military crises and especially the abuse, beyond sufferance, of sovereign power—even necessitate suspending the laws that ordinarily govern nations. The conundrum is common to all human societies, but only Europe found, in the pope-church, a peaceful, rational, and legal way out of it.

Maistre then uses this argument of exceptional ecclesiastical provision in times of crisis to envision an expanding Christianity capable of ensuring the proper application of international law, and with it constitutional sovereignty over free subjects, to all humanity. As he sees it, the law limiting sovereignty that the church implements on exceptional occasions, and that European sovereigns should voluntarily obey, makes the European political model exportable worldwide. *Du pape* historicizes the argument, made twenty-two years earlier in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, that the European king owes his uniquely universalizing sovereignty to his submission to a divine constitution. The difference is that the church now embodies this constitution; that the pope now exercises temporal sovereignty, even if only when the issue of deposition arises legitimately; and that Europe's future expansion will be coterminous with Christianity's. Royal absolutism disappears as a result, and a rein on kings is introduced. The whole model rests on the theory of freedom that Maistre formulated as he observed Russian Orthodoxy at work under Alexander I.

93. Ibid., 131.

94. Ibid., 135.

Unity and Freedom against the *Rascolnics*

Almost immediately after arriving in Saint Petersburg in 1803, Maistre began collecting anecdotes on Russian life. Colorful and varied, most of these little stories mirror in one way or another the ecclesiastical submission to the czar that followed Peter the Great's dissolution of the Moscow patriarchate and establishment of the imperially controlled Holy Synod. Even, then, before Maistre became involved in court politics, the relationship between church and state in Russia fascinated him. The fact that he found himself for the first time in a non-Catholic country encouraged him to look on civic life with new eyes. His quotidian observations help us understand not only the motivations of his argument, in book 2 of *Du pape*, that Europe was born on the day a pope crowned an emperor, but also the character of the Christian Church—freedom generating and unifying—he depicts in book 3. The Russian Church portrayed in the stories appears impotent against moral and political slavery. One reads how a young servant was beaten to death by his master, without the priest daring to make a stir, despite the visible marks of violence on the dead body;⁹⁵ how an inebriated priest dropped the baby he was baptizing into the font; how another lost the Holy Sacrament on a journey;⁹⁶ how Peter the Great once flew into an “extraordinary rage” when a Sorbonne doctor suggested that he ask the advice of the Orthodox episcopacy before implementing his religious program, and threatened to thrash the bishops with a stick if they dared oppose him;⁹⁷ and so forth.

More worrying for Maistre were the “schismatics,” or *rascolnics*, divided into over forty sects spread all over Russia, whom he vaguely dubbed “Originists.” Like many secreted religious groups, the *rascolnics*—who were simply the Old Believers who rejected the reforms of Patriarch Nikon (1605–81)—invited calumnies regarding their rites and practices, all of which Maistre seems to have believed. He tells, horrified, how some of them practice castration and mutilate themselves, while others reject marriage and “mix like beasts”; how some obey priestesses, and others sacrifice children for the sacrament of communion.⁹⁸ In Maistre's opinion the fundamental cause of this proliferation of impiety was the political subjugation of a Russian Orthodox Church too weak to prevent enslavement to the emperor and the division of communities of faith.

95. Fidèle de Grivel and Joseph de Maistre, *Religion et moeurs des russes*, ed. Ivan Gagarin, Bibliothèque slave elzvirienne (Paris: E. Leroux, 1879), 31.

96. Ibid., 27.

97. Ibid., 45.

98. Ibid., 32–35.

Book 3 of *Du pape* tells the rather different, idyllic story of a Christian Church that has not only lifted tyrants' yokes in times of trial but also continuously propagated freedom at the very roots of civil society. Everywhere and at all times before Christianity appeared, slavery was considered to be "a piece necessary to the government and to the political state of nations." No philosopher or legislator thought of condemning it. The intuition that "*man is too evil to be free*," and that it is therefore not possible to govern a nation where civil liberty reigns everywhere "*without extraordinary succour*,"⁹⁹ ensured the endurance of people's ownership of one another. But Christianity freed human beings from the tyranny of other human beings in order to subject them to a law, embodied in the clergy, that perfects them morally and spiritually, and of which European sovereignty is only the political derivation.¹⁰⁰ Importantly, Christianity does not so much relieve humanity of authority—for humans must always and everywhere be governed—but subdues humanity by elevating it, and by teaching it to govern itself. The diverging status of women in Christian and non-Christian societies illustrates this poignantly. Outside Christendom, where the "disordered empire of man over woman" reigns, woman suffers in a state of degradation, returning to man, whose heart she commands, all the perversion she receives from him. Such nations are plunged in a "*vicious cycle*" where vice is a duty, and immorality the necessary corollary of servitude; and which they cannot exit through their own efforts. Christianity alone possesses "the most efficacious means of perfecting man": "to ennoble and exalt woman." The Christian woman is truly a "*supernatural being*," since she is free and raised to a role above her simple nature—which she fulfills by rendering "immense services" to society.¹⁰¹

Even more exalted by the "law of love" are the Christian clergy, who, as vehicles and representatives of divine reason, help form and educate the free individuals who make up Christian society. Insisting that it is not indiscriminate begetting but the making of Christian men and women that matters to social freedom, Maistre points out that, far from destroying societies through celibacy and limiting population growth as some have maintained, every priest during his lifetime gives a hundred children to the government, these being not "a precarious . . . population, even dangerous to the state, but [a] healthy population, opulent and available."¹⁰² The clergy thus reproduces in civil society what the church at large accomplishes for sovereignty. It tames the fero-

99. Maistre, *Du pape*, 232.

100. *Ibid.*, 235.

101. *Ibid.*, 236.

102. *Ibid.*, 272.

cious element in the human character, it encourages liberty while perfecting humanity morally, and it saves society from the dual evils of revolt and servitude. In doing this, it fashions a “miraculous equilibrium,” akin to that which the church establishes in politics, balancing an “immense power [that is not] disordered” and a “perfect obedience [that is not] servile.”¹⁰³ The society it creates can therefore function, be united, and promote happiness without the primal domination that binds non-Christian societies according to Maistre.

The story is certainly too ideal for most critical readers to believe; but it affords two crucial insights into Maistre’s extremely ill-known theory of liberty, which emphasizes, first, liberation from the passions. No nation or institution can be free if the individuals composing it are not emotively emancipated. It is perhaps surprising to find this claim under the quill of a defender of kings, but that is perhaps only because monarchical theories of liberty remain quite ill-known.¹⁰⁴

The second—and still extremely misunderstood—aspect of Maistre’s theory of liberty that *Du pape* discloses is the idea that political liberty is born of the struggle between throne and altar. Certainly, Maistre believes, with Rousseau, that religion and politics should meld in each nation. He maintains that “since religion and sovereignty embrace one another in the state, their interests must necessarily be confounded. It is thus difficult that the second not aid the first in its conquests and impossible, in case of an attack on religion, that sovereignty not take part in the struggle.”¹⁰⁵ Or again: “The rights of the sovereign and the rights of the Church are confounded and the assumed rights of sovereignty are attributed to the Church.”¹⁰⁶ In this sense, throne and altar are united. At the same time, however, the European constitution sketched in *De la souveraineté du peuple* nowhere mentions religion. Although we know that European monarchy confers liberty thanks to the king’s submission to the Christian law, we never learn how this happens. Believing, in his early days as a writer, that only the silent and the unspeakable are politically efficient, Maistre draws a veil discreetly over religion’s political operation. This is because religion is society’s fundamental principle, so that, more than any other power, it must act in silence in order to be effective.

103. Ibid., 278.

104. De Dijn, however, has recently contributed to the subject. See “Liberty and Inequality: The Royalist Discourse,” in *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville*, 40–67.

105. Quoted in Richard A. Lebrun, *Throne and Altar: The Political and Religious Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1965), 154.

106. Ibid.

Less tacit, *Du pape* not only recounts with luxurious erudition the historical enmity between kings and popes; it also describes in detail how future peoples will ask the popes to arbitrate between them and their wayward kings. We know at least that it is the representatives of a people who must ask the pope for help; and we are even provided with the sample letter from the Swedish people to the Vatican. The precise steps the pope will follow still remain obscure; to build, God must act in hiding. But the very fact that his vicar must now decide whether kings should continue to reign confirms that Maistre's church of the end of days has become a revolutionary agent. Too impatient to wait for God's word, it manufactures and exports politics, serving not only as a national but also as an international safeguard of freedom. Thus if Maistre's monarchical theory of liberty supports the sovereign unity of church and state, it advocates their constitutional separation, with the ultimate aim—never hinted at in intellectual portraits of him—of bolstering popular freedom and restraining irrational monarchs.

Universal and freedom bestowing, the church is the civil constitution that has made European society, and that is now poised to reunite the continent. Its candidacy to make of the whole earth a free Christian community is also assured—if only it may preserve a universal language in which to preach, and craft a world civilization.

Exquisite Latin

The sacred language of the Western Church formed and expressed Occidental genius, that “exquisite reason,” that “certain and delicate tact, that always goes looking for the essence of things and neglects all the rest.” The tongue of the “*people-king*,” designed for governance, Latin bears the grandeur of Rome, civilizing the regions of the world that know it and infusing spirituality into all the languages it touches. On a map, the line where it fell silent marks the borders of European fraternity. Within these borders, it is the language of Christianity, European science, and unity. Beyond the Latin frontier, only human brotherhood is to be found. The Enlightenment's uprising against Latin therefore undermined European civilization and solidarity. It was also a mortal blow to beauty. One has only to look at the pedestals of contemporary statues to see that that severe taste, that ability to express the truth purely and tersely that was Latin's alone, has vanished:

Instead of that noble laconism, you will read tales in vernacular language. The marble condemned to babble weeps the language that gave it that beautiful style that had a name among all other styles, and that,

from the stone on which it had established itself, threw itself into the memories of all men.¹⁰⁷

With Latin, Europe loses its memory, its culture, its aesthetics, its spirituality. It deserts that individuality of expression, so contrary to abstract philosophic discourse, that knows the essence of a thing by simply naming it.¹⁰⁸ All, however, is not lost. In the future Europe will expand—not through the subjugation of nations by nations, but through the ministry of the church. Inevitably, this imminent historical upheaval will be accompanied by the resurrection, and this time eternal life, of Latin.¹⁰⁹

Maistre read and wrote Latin easily from an early age, but began to consider its civilizing powers only in Russia. In September of 1812 the Russian Bible Society (henceforth RBS), a chapter of the Bible Society, was established in Saint Petersburg. It began almost immediately the mass distribution of cheap editions of the Church Slavonic Bible for Orthodox believers and, on Alexander's request, published New Testaments in the Russian vernacular. The RBS remained true to its radical Low Church origins, forsaking ecclesiastical government, the sacraments, and liturgical worship, and emphasizing individualism, mass literacy, and cultural nationalism instead. It did this in the spirit of curing ignorance and spreading global spiritual enlightenment through God's word. The RBS also rose quickly through Russia's hierarchies, becoming a close partner of the Russian government and one of the most powerful institutions in the empire. In this position, it promoted zealously state religious tolerance of heterodoxy. The status of traditional churches deteriorated as a result, and the Orthodox Church became a simple "first church among equals."¹¹⁰

Maistre's reflections on the relationship between language and the Christian mission led him, predictably, to eschew the reading of scripture in the vernacular on Catholic grounds. But it stimulated him also to ponder Latin's socializing virtues. For Maistre, the expressive and mnemonic qualities of this sacred tongue represented the antithesis of the RBS's evangelizing ideology focused on scriptural availability. It was, according to Maistre, an ideology sterile at best and communally disintegrating as a matter of course, since, "read without notes or any form of commentary, Holy Writ is [a] poison"¹¹¹

107. Maistre, *Du pape*, 126.

108. *Ibid.*, 77.

109. *Ibid.*, 127.

110. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries*, 160.

111. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, 774. Quoted by Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: The Paradox of the Writer," 83.

useful only for conflictive deliberation. Excessively concerned with science, Maistre observes, the RBS “every year informs us of how many copies of the Bible it has thrown into the world; but always . . . forgets to tell us how many new Christians it has borne.”¹¹² For him evangelization is less an informative activity than a mission accomplished through “preaching accompanied by music, painting, solemn rites, and all the demonstrations of faith without discussion.”¹¹³ The Christian spirit is best nurtured with the values and traditions that ecclesiastical institutions encode, and that Latin transmits. That the *vulgus* does not fully understand them does not matter too much, since moral and spiritual development proceeds not so much through intellectual understanding of spiritual things—often obscure (because all-causative) to the human mind—as through the living, feeling, and acting out of spiritual truths.¹¹⁴ The tradition that Latin encodes—ecclesiastical ritual and the pasts of Europe—is thus antithetical to the religious patriotism of Protestant “science,” unfailingly destructive though historically necessary.

Like the RBS, the Holy Alliance of 1815 stimulated Maistre to ruminate on the relationship between social integration and individual spiritual education. Unlike the RBS, however, the Alliance raised the prospect of European Christian unity with an immediacy that involved Maistre personally, and that compelled him to define, in Book 4, his dream of a hastening age.

Book 4 and the Holy Alliance

In February of 1817, Maistre wrote to the Sardinian minister of foreign affairs explaining that the fourth and last book of *Du pape*, devoted to the pope’s relations with schismatic churches, was a refutation of the *Considérations sur la doctrine et l’esprit de l’église orthodoxe* of Alexander Sturdza. A political reformer and adviser to the czar, Sturdza was the principal thinker of the Holy Alliance in the mid-1810s and a staunch Orthodox believer who condemned the splendor of Latin civilization as a betrayal of Christianity. Partly a denunciation of Catholicism in the aftermath of the expulsion of the Jesuits from Saint Petersburg in December of 1815 and January of 1816, the *Considérations* impacted Maistre so powerfully that he dubbed *Du pape* “the anti-Sturdza.”¹¹⁵ He described Sturdza’s work as “an exposition of the principal Christian dogmas derived from Holy Scripture,” followed by “an

112. Maistre, *Du pape*, 221.

113. *Ibid.*, 223–24.

114. *Ibid.*, 127.

115. See *OC*, 14:212.

apology of the dogmas and the rites of the Greek Church,” and “a most violent attack on Latin doctrine.”¹¹⁶ The *Considérations* “tormented” Maistre, not only because it fiercely attacked Catholicism and its Jesuit variety most particularly, but more personally because Alexander Sturdza was a man whom Maistre esteemed highly and the brother of Roksandra Sturdza, an intimate friend of Maistre’s. Any understanding of Maistre’s argument in *Du pape*—especially in book 4—cannot therefore be complete without the story of his relations with the Sturdza siblings.

Alexander and his sister, Roksandra, were Moldavian aristocrats whose uncles had risen in the Ottoman service and been summarily executed on orders from the Turkish government. The Sturdza family was devastated by this tragedy and moved to Russia, where Alexander and Roksandra grew up as Greek patriots in the circle of the charismatic Ioannis Capodistrias (1776–1831), abhorring Islam and the Turks and devoting themselves to the service of the czar, whom they saw as their helper and protector in the making of Greek independence. Roksandra exerted a profound influence on her younger brother: her religious odyssey brought them both first to Maistre, and later to the Pietist mysticism in vogue in Germany during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

Roksandra and Maistre first met at the house of Admiral Tchitchagov in 1807, and became inseparable during the next five years. Excepting Catholicism, they agreed on everything, sharing the same political views, religious interests, and social ambitions. Maistre, who always preferred the company of women and sought their constant approval, found in the twenty-one-year-old Roksandra a devoted pupil and affectionate friend. Roksandra, for her part, harbored a great admiration for the elderly diplomat. She acquired eagerly an encyclopedic knowledge of his quotations, and benefited from his paternal protection at court. It was Maistre who initiated her stellar ascent to the position of maid of honor to Empress Elizabeth Alexeievna (1779–1826) by introducing her to the Catholic convert Countess Barbara Nikolaevna Golovine (1766–1821).¹¹⁷

The year 1812, however, brought a reversal of Maistre’s and Roksandra’s social fortunes, and the beginnings of a change in their friendship. One bad sign was that the Tarists became disagreeable to the czar, which made it difficult for the new Fräulein to visit her friend as freely as she had before. More significantly, Roksandra accompanied the imperial family on a trip to

116. Ibid., 14:83.

117. A. Markovits, “Joseph de Maistre i Sainte-Beuve v pismach k R. Sturdza-Edling,” *Literaturnoye nasledstvo* 33 (1939): 388.

Germany in 1813, and the next year returned to Russia a very different person, filled with Pietistic ideas and the nondenominational Providentialism of the Awakening that Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling and Juliane de Krüdener (1764–1824) had preached to her in Baden in 1814. The chiliasm of Franz von Baader (1765–1841), encountered in 1815, followed. Stressing personal devotion over dogmatic correctness, and interpreting the Napoleonic Wars as harbingers of an apocalypse that would come from the East, the Romantic piety that Roksandra learned from the popular religious figures of nineteenth-century Prussia was one of patriotism, introspection, devotion to kings, and personal, emotional bonds between people as means to arrive at God.

Almost immediately after her introduction to Pietism, Roksandra became its apostle to “nontraditional” Orthodoxy. From Germany she wrote letters to Alexander, recommending the works of Jung-Stilling. Alexander responded skeptically and warned her about “German books,” but a year later the czar himself asked to be admitted as a spiritual child of the “mystical marriage” that Roksandra had contracted with the “Patriarch of the Awakening.”¹¹⁸ More consequentially, Roksandra initiated the emperor’s intense Pietistic education by recommending Madame de Krüdener to him in 1815. It was an education that included Roksandra’s own preaching of the Awakening to Alexander at the Congress of Vienna, where she spoke of inner peace and communion with God through avoidance of the world, and of submission to God in the performance of his will.¹¹⁹ The lessons earned her the emperor’s brief favor, and, aided by illuminist readings and Krüdener’s efforts, culminated in the signing of the Holy Alliance on September 26, 1815. In this document of spiritual emotion, the czar and the monarchs of Prussia and Austria declared a “true and indissoluble fraternity” for one another, “looking on themselves as merely designated by Providence to govern three branches of the One family,” and their peoples as members of “one and the same Christian nation.” They also vowed to refrain from war with one another and to help each other apply to politics the eternal Christian principles of “Justice, . . . Charity, and Peace.”¹²⁰

But the Pietistic lessons to the czar also brought Roksandra the empress’s undisguised hatred, and resulted in her loss of the *Fräulein*ship toward the end of 1815. The two preceding years had nonetheless sufficed the young courtier to infuse the Russian nobility with a variety of ecumenism that,

118. Jung-Stilling. See Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries*, 155.

119. Markovits, “Joseph de Maistre i Sainte-Beuve v pismach k R. Sturdza-Edling,” 456.

120. “Holy Alliance,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07398a.htm>.

when applied to diplomacy, implied a review of European international politics since the Thirty Years' War. At that time, in an attempt to palliate the internecine conflicts occasioned by religious rivalries, the national interest had replaced confessionalism and sentimental attachment to the person of the sovereign as the governing principle of international relations.¹²¹ This was perhaps why diplomatic Pietism had appealed first, among European nations, to a Russia that had been involved in European politics for less than a century, and that borrowed its diplomatic principles from Byzantium.

It was this new ideal of international relations that Maistre—possibly aided by the Saint Petersburg Jesuits—countered in *Du pape*. There, he proposed a Europeanist ecumenism more compatible with the contemporary practice of European diplomacy, and consciously opposed to the ideals of the Holy Alliance. In fact, the ultimate petering out of Roksandra's friendship with Maistre during 1814–16 may be understood as a ripple of the development, within conservative circles, of two disparate and rival varieties of religious Europeanism: Orthodox-Pietistic and ultramontane.

Book 4 of *Du pape*, devoted to describing the historical relationship between the pope and the Eastern churches, depicts the Greek Church as permeated by a principle of “*insurrection against sovereign unity*”¹²² that is politically much more powerful than any dogmatic affinities between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The close of book 4 is an uninterrupted rant against the Greeks, the people who speak what is perhaps the most beautiful language human beings have ever spoken,¹²³ who elevated aesthetics and the arts to the most sublime heights; but who allowed the very beauty of their language to corrupt them and make of them sophists, loquacious quarrelers, lovers of form, of disputation; seducers, imitators, liars, slaves; regarding whom Cicero pleaded that their testimony not be accepted in a court of law, since their nation knew nothing of good faith or of the sacredness of oaths.¹²⁴

More than a little resentment against Roksandra and her brother may have gone into this diatribe, modeled on Sturdza's own fits of spite against Russian Catholics in the *Considérations*. Yet book 4 still manages to argue for Christian unity, and to recommend means for its attainment. This unity requires, first, that “science”—understood both in the large eighteenth-century sense of discursive reasoning and in the narrower theological one of scriptural

121. “The History of Diplomacy: The Renaissance to 1815,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, DVD-ROM, 2001.

122. Maistre, *Du pape*, 320.

123. *Ibid.*, 332.

124. *Ibid.*, 330–32.

exegesis—be temporarily abandoned. History has proven that excessive critical reasoning in religion engenders confessional dissolution. And while Maistre believes that “*science and religion will never ally outside unity*,”¹²⁵ he also looks forward to their bond as the crown on a Christian unity that he awaits optimistically. He writes that it is already possible to see in the Protestants “an ardent and pure desire, separated from all spirit of pride and of contention,”¹²⁶ hastening their return to unity. And he predicts that national religious boundaries will be effaced, beginning in the Eastern churches.

Mirroring the development of his relationship with the Sturdzas, Maistre’s attitude to the Holy Alliance was initially favorable and worsened with time. In 1816, when his own king was invited to sign the treaty, Maistre advised him to do so. The illuminism of the Alliance, he explained, “prepared all men for Catholicism, putting out the hatred of the sects.”¹²⁷ In those days Maistre still seems to have viewed the Pietists benevolently as he had done four years earlier when, composing the *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie* and perhaps won over by Roksandra, he had depicted them sympathetically as well-intentioned ecumenists whose spirituality neared them to Catholic mysticism.¹²⁸ By 1818, however, the year he wrote the *Lettre à Monsieur le marquis . . . sur l’état du christianisme en Europe*—an encrypted address to the czar—Maistre had changed his mind. Despairingly, the *Lettre* accused the “Great Power” (Russia) of having “embraced the grievous dream of *religiosity* or of *universal Christianity*.”¹²⁹ The Holy Alliance born of this dream now proved that kings desired to “consolidate all the sects,” not forge true Christian unity. All of Europe’s monarchs were therefore in a sense dethroned, and none could claim to reign as much as his father or his ancestor.¹³⁰

The corollary of rejecting the Holy Alliance was searching for an organized system independent—like Saint-Simon and Thierry’s Europe—of the talents and dispositions of individuals. Maistre’s *Mémoires politiques et correspondance diplomatique* (1858) modeled a tense European equilibrium where small powers, threatening constantly to ally with one another, kept the great powers geographically apart, minimizing contact between them. The system was Maistre’s attempt at obviating militarism, and especially the speeding international arms race led by Frederic II and Alexander I.¹³¹ In *Du pape* these

125. Ibid., 305.

126. Ibid., 306.

127. OC, 13:291.

128. OC, 8:327–28.

129. OC, 7:512.

130. Ibid., 7:489.

131. Stepanov, “Joseph de Maistre v Rossii,” 581.

sovereigns, in whom a taste for the military was only one among various failings, appeared as undiscerning political strategists who had allowed themselves to be brought back to earth, and were no longer anything but men.¹³²

Ironically, the negligence of sentiment for kings and the recommendation of an international order established on the common interest harmonized more readily with the rational and secular principles of the Austrian diplomacy that Maistre's status as a Sardinian subject and a pious Catholic obliged him to oppose. Fearing that, like Venice, Piedmont would succumb to Austria's imperial ambitions in Italy,¹³³ he thought Austrian international politics arrogant and unintelligent.¹³⁴ Yet Austria's diplomacy was quite congenial with *Du pape's* Europeanism. During his years as head of the Austrian State Chancery (1753–92), Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz (1711–94) modeled Europe as a centralized conglomerate of individual states whose rights were limited by common duties to the collective of states. An admiring friend of Voltaire and the *Encyclopédistes* and a onetime employer of Rousseau, Kaunitz practiced Richelieu's diplomacy, whereby reason of state transcends the ruler's wishes, dynastic or sentimental concerns, and ethical or religious considerations.

The Machiavellian expulsion of morals from politics implied by this kind of diplomacy repelled Maistre,¹³⁵ who also disapproved of the policies that Kaunitz derived from his diplomatic principles—territorial expansion and increase of central state authority via subordination of church and nobility. But Kaunitz was a pupil of Grotius and the first to introduce, as an international law, a joint European responsibility with respect to social, economic, and intellectual affairs, whose application would be ensured through treaties between the great powers as cases arose. On this point he coincided with Maistre, whose pope-church was meant to incarnate disembodied, legal international principles similar to those that Kaunitz sought to express through treaties. Indeed, Maistre's pope-church and Kaunitz's international law fulfilled analogous functions, the one as protector of peoples from oppressive sovereigns, the other as a regulator of national interests.

In his old age Kaunitz wrote down the beliefs that had animated most of his life's work as chancellor in a series of manuscripts left for his successor to peruse. Certainly the successor was not wanting in diplomatic

132. Maistre, *Du pape*, 143.

133. OC, 10:341–42; OC, 13:32.

134. OC, 9:297, 503; OC, 10:25. See also Maistre, *Mémoires politiques et correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre, avec explications et commentaires historiques par Albert Blanc*, ed. Albert Blanc, 3rd ed. (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1864), 173–92.

135. See especially OC, 9:488; OC, 12:260; and OC, 10:112.

talent and the Napoleonic Wars created exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, the treaties and agreements that were signed during the years of Metternich's apogee (1815–23)—at Vienna (1815), Aachen (1818), Troppau (1820), Laibach (1821), and Verona (1822)—were but practical applications of Kaunitz's principles.¹³⁶ Metternich (1773–1859) had no use for personal alliances between kings. It is no accident that he hated Madame de Krüdener, the Pietistic mastermind of the Holy Alliance, with a violence that became renowned,¹³⁷ and that the European system he presided over was characterized by ultramontaniam.¹³⁸ Composing his own version of the Kaunitz manuscripts toward the end of his life, Metternich approached Maistre's appraisal of the long-term uses of the Alliance:

The Holy Alliance, even in the prejudiced eyes of its originator (the tsar), had no other aim than that of a moral manifesto, while in the eyes of the other signers of the document it lacked even this value, and consequently justified none of the interpretations which in the end party spirit gave to it. The most unanswerable proof of the correctness of this fact is probably the circumstance, that in all the following period, no mention was made or even could have been made of the Holy Alliance in the correspondence of the cabinets with one another. The Holy Alliance was not an institution for the suppression of the rights of the nations, for the promotion of absolutism, or for any kind of tyranny. It was solely an emanation of the pietistic feelings of the Emperor Alexander, and the application of the principles of Christianity to politics.¹³⁹

In the end the Alliance was politically more consequential than this passage suggests. It lasted formally until Verona, and its ideals were instrumental in controlling rebellions in Europe until 1848. Maistre, in fact, would have argued that it was effective precisely because it hardly existed on paper. If both he and Metternich tended to dismiss it as a political nullity and an autocrat's caprice, it is because they were both conscious, in different ways, that international politics were no longer governed by royal beliefs but by institutionalized reason. Philosophic rationalism had of course influenced this opinion in both cases; but some form of Catholic rationalism, compatible with the former, probably had as well, while Pietistic sentimentalism pro-

136. Cited in "Holy Alliance."

137. Plonger, "Le christianisme comme messianisme social," in Plonger, *Les défis de la modernité*, 858.

138. Plonger, "De Napoléon à Metternich: Une modernité en état de blocus," in Plonger, *Les défis de la modernité*, 636.

139. Cited in "Holy Alliance."

vided a useful antithesis. Early Romantic Protestant Europeanism had tended to believe that personal religious or philosophical convictions condition politics and history: Staël and Novalis both understood history as a succession of beliefs or principles culminating in freedom, while, in *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1777–80), Lessing classified historical epochs according to the belief or form of knowledge that dominated in each, emphasizing the sole historical meaning of the moral and epistemological.¹⁴⁰ The reason-of-state model of treaty-based diplomacy practiced by Kaunitz and Metternich assumed instead that history, like diplomacy, is guided by a reason, more or less formally institutionalized, that behaves like law.

Maistre's theory that history alternates between ages of spiritual reason characterized by a stable social order and ages of individual reason destructive of that order was the corollary of his international political rationalism. According to it, spiritual reason creates a tranquil unity of nations, while individual reason produces ephemeral associations between nations, usually forged by passion, that coexist with spiritual unity in each age—as the alliance against Catholicism existing since the Reformation suggests.¹⁴¹ Reason, however, is destined ultimately to reign supreme, and to usher in the epoch of universal Christian unity envisaged at *Du pape's* close. Harkening back to the Middle Ages, Maistre hopes that the modern church will soon replicate ancient Christianity's triumph over paganism. The West will then relive the peaceful conquest of the Pantheon, which “concentrated *all* the forces of idolatry” yet “[united] *all* the lights of faith”; housed “ALL THE GODS” and became the temple of “ALL THE SAINTS.”¹⁴² And then Europe will be remade.

Replacing *Du pape* in its original Russian context reveals a Maistre never before glimpsed, a man exasperated with kings who sought by every means possible to moderate the excesses, and find correctives for the mistakes, of those he served. By the time he published *Du pape*, Maistre had become a theorist of political restraint attuned to the changing fortunes of history. Indeed one wonders whether, toward the end of his life, he remained an unwavering monarchist—at least in temporal matters—or whether the political relativism, modeled on Montesquieu, that his historical thought adopted since the 1790s proved a temptation too strong. What is certain is that, in

140. Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 218–25.

141. Maistre, *Du pape*, 301–4.

142. *Ibid.*, 361.

lending to the church powers of political revision, Maistre was not simply seeking to temper his anti-kingly feelings, or to attend to present expedience. He was also bidding to make history as little cyclical, and as greatly linear, as possible, to ease the arrival of the Christian unity that would dissolve politics and mark history's end. Arguing that the pope-church should dispense sovereignty was not a pious exercise, a sign of reactionary nostalgia for medieval times. It was a revolutionary move that followed a revolutionary logic, an attempt to enhance the historical role of reason and minimize that of passion; to render spiritual ages long and critical ages short; to make the parabolas that defined the history of nations look more and more like the ascending line that modeled the history of the church; to save kings from themselves, and God's freedom from Caesar's tyranny.

It was, in short, a concession to Revolution. By the end of the 1810s—long before the dream of Engels, Marx, and Trotsky—Maistre, horrified, realized that the Revolution had become permanent. And he saw no solution at hand but to fight it with its own weapons and appropriate it for his own ends, to embrace Anti-revolution and forsake Counter-revolution. When he wrote to his daughter Constance that *Du pape* “would only do evil,” he knew only too well that, in deposing kings rationally, his popes of the future were newly fashioned Robespierres; and that in making politics, spreading everywhere, and hastening utopia, his church of the end of days was a revolutionary machine.

Du pape is also an exceedingly libertarian text that shows that by the 1810s Maistre was no longer the moderate absolutist of the Rousseau essays. Exposing a largely unknown, monarchical theory of liberty, *Du pape* claims that civil and political liberty are the products, first, of freedom from the passions and, second, of the order that is born of the continual opposition between spiritual and temporal sovereignties. The king who can be deposed at his people's request is no longer absolute; and the church that performs this function is no pillar of the state. The break with Maistre's early political essays is decisive.

Du pape's Russian context, finally, opens a new horizon on the intellectual origins of nineteenth-century French visions of the future. Although Maistre conveyed Saint-Martin's illuminism to his utopian socialist and traditionalist interpreters, his work was even more filled with the messianic hopes of the Slavic mystics and German Pietists he combated. The religious themes that were so prominent in French Romantic works of the 1820s and 1830s—the anticipation of a new age, the sacralization of intellectuals, the search for the prophet-savior—were thus partly Russian in origin, and arrived in France with the historical vision of *Du pape*, and of Maistre's mystical texts.

CHAPTER 4

Redemption by Suffering

Social Violence and Historical Development in the Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices

The *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, possibly the first contribution to the sociology of violence, revolutionized the European understanding of the relationship between society and violence. It also introduced key themes of Maistrian historical thought. This chapter describes the little text's historical theoretical innovations in intellectual context. It emphasizes the role that Maistre ascribed to sacrifice as a historical motor and as a vehicle of the eschaton. And it situates the little text in various eclectic intellectual contexts ranging from illuminism to baroque devotionism to the reflections on violence spawned by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Maistre began writing the *Éclaircissement* in 1809, the year that he returned to his studies of esotericism after a decade's pause. In Saint Petersburg he was far from Turin's surveillance and could associate freely with Freemasons, whose societies, lacking the political charge they had carried in Piedmont-Sardinia, prospered in Russia. A farewell letter to the Swedish ambassador Baron Kurt de Stedingk suggests his renewed links with the Masonic world: "How sweet it would be to me, Monsieur le Maréchal, to be received in your lodge again!"¹ At the same time, Maistre's years of distance from illuminism

1. Cited by Jean Rebotton in Maistre, *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, 29.

had taught him to be wary of the revolutionary potential it had acquired in some forms. In 1810, he confessed to the Sardinian minister of foreign affairs that he had been tempted to join the new Russian lodges, but that powerful reasons had dissuaded him:

Despite the extreme desire that I have to know what is done there, I have decided against it, after careful reflection, for many reasons of which I content myself to report to you the two principal ones. . . . In the first place, I have learned that the emperor has only permitted these assemblies with regret. . . . In the second place, I have had occasion to convince myself that many people . . . thought ill of this association, and regarded it as a revolutionary machine.²

There was, of course, widespread fear of the Bavarian illuminati, those sworn enemies of throne and altar infamous throughout Europe, whom Maistre denounced in the *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*.³ The conviction of Feodor Rostopchin (1763–1826) that the Martinists were the czar’s “hidden enemies” and “Napoleon’s fifth column” in urgent need of persecution by the state⁴ probably made some impact on Maistre as well. Tellingly, the new century found him much more sympathetic to the thesis of Augustin Barruel’s *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du jacobinisme* (1797–99) than he had been in the Venetian notebooks of 1799.⁵ Another sign of his growing doubts about the political implications of institutionalized illuminism was his reaction to Pius VII’s imprisonment in 1810. On that occasion, his first suspicions fell on international Freemasonry. In fact, 1810 was a time of “crisis”—short-lived and unrepeatable—in Maistre’s attitude to that movement.⁶

On the whole, though, fears of Freemasonry were more than balanced by Maistre’s gradual return to esoteric mysticism, begun in 1809 with the rereading of Origen, and manifested by his growing belief in the Catholic potential of illuminism. If the Holy Alliance’s Pietism caused him to doubt the treaty’s political durability, its solemn illuminist beginnings provided the main intellectual reason for his early, positive commentary on the Alliance. When in 1816 King Victor-Emmanuel I (1759–1824) asked for the opinion of his extraordinary envoy on the Alliance, Maistre responded by writing that illuminism and the Catholic religion were compatible:

2. OC, 11:471.

3. OC, 8:331.

4. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries*, 129.

5. “Notes manuscrites de Joseph de Maistre sur l’ouvrage de Barruel: *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du jacobinisme*,” *Sociétés secrètes*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J11, 8ff.

6. Auguste Viatte, *Les sources occultes du romantisme* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1928), 2:68 and 87.

One must not believe that everything [the illuminists] say and write is evil; they have on the contrary many very healthy ideas and . . . come close to us in two ways: first, their own clergy no longer has any influence on their minds, they despise it profoundly, and consequently they do not listen to it; if they do not believe ours, at least they do not despise it, and they have even admitted that our priests had preserved the primitive spirit better; in the second place, Catholic mystics having much analogy with the ideas of the illuminists on the inner cult, these last have thrown themselves . . . on this class of authors. They read nothing but Saint Teresa, Saint Francis de Sales, Fénelon, Madame Guyon, etc.; yet, it is impossible that they become learned in such writings without drawing notably near to us; and I have learned that a great enemy of the Catholic religion said, not long ago: *What displeases me, is that all this illuminism will end up in Catholicism.*⁷

At the time of this letter, Maistre had been thinking about reconciling illuminism and Catholicism for at least seven years. In the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, he suggested how to achieve this through the theme of sacrifice.

Sacrifice had been an Enlightenment theme. First broached in England in the course of deist debates on the double-truth doctrine, it was later taken up by French writers like Charles Batteux (1713–80), Julien Jean Offray de La Mettrie (1709–51), Guillaume baron de Sainte-Croix (1746–1809), the abbé Noël-Antoine Pluche (1688–1761), and Dupuis in wide-ranging deliberations on the origin of primitive mysteries and rituals.⁸ The speculations of these men on the social purposes of immolation in turn fused with the baroque devotionism of Jesuits and Oratorians to yield mystical currents. By the 1770s, ideas of salvation by blood and sacrifice, echoing the theme of “precious blood,” pervaded the cult of the Sacred Heart—devotedly patronized by the late queen consort Maria Leszczyńska (1703–68)⁹—and began to circulate in mystical circles. The duchesse de Bourbon acquired a protégée very innovative in this kind of spirituality,¹⁰ which reached its highest lyrical expression in the mysticism of Saint-Martin and especially in his last book, *Le ministère de l’homme-esprit* (1802), a text announcing that humanity was rehabilitated through the cumulative effects of Christ’s Passion and the suffering of the “men of desire” who followed him. Individuals whose “heart,” “delivered to paternal love, has no longer room for crime or injustice,” Saint-

7. OC, 13:221.

8. Manuel, *Changing of the Gods*, 34.

9. Plonger, “Combats spirituels et réponses pastorales à l’incrédulité du siècle,” 280.

10. Frank Paul Bowman, *Le Christ romantique* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), 35–36.

Martin's "men of desire" are filled with the love of God. Their souls and God's are united like "virtuous spouses," "like angels in exile, who have glimpsed from afar the eternal temple, associate to return together there, and who every day, strive . . . to become more agile and more pure, to be worthy of being admitted."¹¹ In this way, they contemplate nature, waiting for the divine hand to present them with nature's "live action."¹² This dual idea of worldliness and striving in suffering yielded a historicist moment—rare in the esoteric tradition¹³—of subsequent importance. *Le ministère de l'homme-esprit* argues that Christ's sacrifice sanctified the universe, but incompletely: the men of desire who followed him, possessed, unlike him, of the Spirit, have been completing his work for centuries, emulating him yet exceeding him in their efforts—a vision common in Maistre's mystical works.

The *Encyclopédie's* historically minded article "Sacrifice" by Louis de Jaucourt (1704–80), which traced the first sacrifices to the Egyptians' pouring of libations, and to their offerings of the first herbs of the harvest, may have also influenced the *Éclaircissement*. Over time, Jaucourt speculated, original, simple gifts were followed by that of perfumes, called ἀρώματα, from the Greek ἀρώμα, which means "to pray."¹⁴ Animal sacrifice began accidentally, as a result of animals' trampling of herbs intended as offerings on the altar. Finally, as hinted at by the words "victim" and "host," war brought the horror of human sacrifice. For Jaucourt, the history of sacrifice could be understood in terms of a progressive increase in ritual violence caused by accidents and paralleled by the development of human belligerence and carnivorous habits.¹⁵ Sacrifice is hence unrelated to moral progress, and if anything antiprogressive.

Most influentially, the Terror precipitated sociological speculations on violence and sacrifice by extolling murderer-victims like Brutus as sacred citizens who killed and died for the republic. During the Terror, images of Caesar's death surfaced with remarkable frequency, to the point that the two Brutuses, the killer of the Tarquin tyrant and his more famous descendant, merged into

11. Saint-Martin, *L'homme de désir*, 119.

12. Ibid., 124.

13. Arthur McCalla, "French Romantic Philosophies of History," in *Western Esoterism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers Presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*, ed. Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 260.

14. Contrary to Jaucourt's claim, "aroma," which originally meant "sweet spice," derives not from the Greek ἀρώμα, but from the Greek ἀρώμενοι (Latin "arare"), which means "to plow." The connection between "plowing" and "sweet spice" was presumably the smell of good earth upturned. See Eric Partridge, *Origins: An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 26.

15. Louis de Jaucourt, "Sacrifice," in D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 14:478–84.

one figure of valiant, rational, executionist self-sacrifice for the common republican good. The Committee of Public Safety ordered that Voltaire's plays on the two Brutuses, *Brutus* (1730) on Lucius Junius and *La mort de César* (1731) on Marcus Publius, be performed weekly by all the theaters in Paris.¹⁶ The new popularity of these two republican victim-heroes was accompanied by that of their biographer, Plutarch, whose *Parallel Lives* were popular reading among Jacobins and Girondins. Robespierre filled his speeches with allusions to the Roman spirit of self-sacrifice that the Delphic priest had described so well. Charlotte Corday (1768–93) spent the night before she assassinated Marat reading Plutarch, and at her trial referred to the *Lives* in self-justification. Yet all the speculations on the spilling of blood and its larger meaning that the Terror promoted were limited to justifying executions. None drew any conclusions about sacrifice's socializing and historicizing powers.

Though deeply preoccupied by the Terror's violence, Maistre did not adhere to the explanations of violence it promoted. His sacrifice neither justified policy nor arose accidentally in early human history. Sacrifice for him was *the* primal, essential, and continual social activity, whose efficacy depended on the victim's innocence. No mere curiosity or specialized subject, sacrifice explained social, historical, and moral progress with complete systematicness.

Maistre's preoccupation with violence long preceded the Revolution. Obligated since his early adolescence as a *pénitent noir* to witness tortures and executions, and later faced regularly, as a magistrate, with the state's administration of punishment, Maistre was profoundly disturbed by bloodshed and highly sensitive to its status as a fundamental human experience. His correspondence leaves no doubt that he hated violence.¹⁷ Far from revealing any sadism, Maistre's detailed description of the executioner's work and theoretical explanation of sacrifice was his way of unburdening himself of his innermost fears—realized en masse by the Revolution—and of expressing his deep concern for human suffering.

The paradox was that this concern was philosophically supported by a pessimist Christian anthropology.

Duplicitous Man: Ancient and Augustinian Theories of Evil

The *Éclaircissement* opens by refuting the Lucretian attribution of religion to fear and associating religion with the highest human sentiments. Rather

16. Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 32.

17. Compagnon, *Les antimodernes*, 117.

than worship out of fear, says Maistre, “men, in giving God names that express grandeur, power, and kindness, in calling him *Lord, Master, Father*, etc., demonstrated . . . that the idea of divinity could not be the daughter of fear . . . , music, poetry, dancing, in a word all the agreeable arts, were called to cult ceremonies; and . . . the idea of joy was always so intimately mingled with that of *feast*, that the latter became everywhere a synonym of the first.” Yet the question of the origins of religion is irremediably paradoxical, and the fear thesis demands some credence: “One must confess . . . that history shows us man persuaded in all times of this frightening truth: *that he lived under the hand of an irritated power, and that this power could be appeased only with sacrifices.*”¹⁸

As deists like John Toland (1670–1722) and John Trenchard (1662–1723) had done before him, Maistre locates the terrors of religion in a bodily source—“in the *sensitive principle, in life, in the soul* . . . so carefully distinguished by the ancients from the *spirit* or intelligence.”¹⁹ Yet where deist psychologies depicted religion as the aberrant explanation of pain by reason, or as a blockage of communication between the individual and the world,²⁰ Maistre deems bodily impulses like pain primal, determining and not susceptible of modification or assimilation. He allows that religious fear arises from the movements of the “sentient principle” or soul seated in the body; but he considers that these movements are naturally and irreversibly contrary to those of the spirit, and that the best humanity can do is not to assimilate them, but to quiet them through sacrifice.

The ancient Platonic and illuminist anthropology whereby human beings are divided into body, soul, and spirit justifies this assumption. The spirit, rising up to the universal and moving toward unity, brings mankind to perform its duty without hesitation. Homer says that Jupiter, having determined to make a hero victorious, has weighed his decision “*in his spirit*; he is *one*: there can be no combat within him.” But the soul, descending toward the particular, moves to divide man; so that, if “long agitated between his duty and his passion [a] man has been on the point of committing an inexcusable violence, he has deliberated *in his soul and in his spirit.*”²¹ The body alone is passive, the object for whose control spirit and soul contest. The “primitive and universal degradation” that the men of all centuries have never ceased to confess derives from the fact that being two, at once wanting and not wanting, loving

18. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 805.

19. *Ibid.*, 806.

20. Manuel, *Changing of the Gods*, 44–45.

21. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 807.

and hating evil, attracted and repelled by the same object, humanity cannot possibly be true to itself or about itself: it must necessarily be duplicitous, lying to God, to others, and to itself. Hence the cry of Augustine, confessing the command that old ghosts still wielded over his soul: “Then, Lord! Am I ME? No, without doubt,” replies Maistre, “he was not HE, and no one knew it better than HE, who tells us in the same place: *There is such a difference between MYSELF and MYSELF*.”²² Pascal had picked up this Augustinian (and originally Platonic) idea of the human contradiction, commenting that the “*so visible*” “*duplicity of man*” had led some to believe that we have “*two souls*.” Maistre criticizes this point, observing that the difficulty is not to explain the “*sudden varieties*” of a “*simple subject*” as Pascal claimed, but his “*simultaneous oppositions*.”²³ The point may seem pedantic but can make a big difference to historical explanation. A mercurial character like Pascal’s is developmentally unconstrained. But a subject consistently incongruous carries within her the paradox necessary for the generation of history: she is a vessel, so to speak, of concentrated time.

Criticism aside, the *Éclaircissement*’s Augustinian vision of a conflicted humanity combines with the Martinist concept of the “prevarication” or metaphysical fall of man to make up Maistre’s concept of “duplicity.” Like prevarication, duplicity is symbolically encoded in individual anthropology; and like Augustinian contradiction, it explains experience. Unlike its predecessors, however, Maistrian “duplicity” is resolved by sacrifice, which expiates the guilt accumulated as a result of the opposed movements of spirit and soul. “Life itself being guilty,” a life less precious can be offered up in its stead—a soul for a soul, the ἀντίψυχον [*sic*; ἀντιψύχικον] or *vicaria anima*, literally, the “substitute soul.” Sacrifice, in turn, is efficacious in direct proportion to the innocence of the victim’s blood. This is no metaphor, but a bold, conscious restatement of Origen’s speculation that the “soul of the flesh resides in the blood.” Though deemed theologically unconventional even by Origen himself,²⁴ the doctrine harmonized well with the devotional mysticism of the late eighteenth century, and with its themes of the “precious blood” that emanated from *doux* and holy victims like Jesus and Mary. Significantly, among ancient Platonic ontologies, Maistre chose the one that linked the physical and the material most closely. The two realms

22. Ibid., 809–10.

23. Ibid., 808.

24. For Origen’s doctrine of the soulfulness of the blood, see Origen, *Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide*, ed. Jean Scherer (Paris: Cerf, 1960).

could thus interact continuously across time, and a new theory of sacrifice could be born, positing the value of sacrifice as determined by the nature of the blood it spills.

The *Doux* and Perfect Victim

A spiritual act, Maistrian sacrifice necessarily involves the offering of sentient beings. Far from passive—like those of the *Encyclopédie*—the victims of the *Éclaircissement* are active spiritual agents whose utility, docility, capacity for self-mastery, and predisposition to self-annihilation determine sacrificial efficacy. Significantly, Maistre points out, no wild beasts, beasts of prey, serpents, fish, stupid animals, or animals alien to humankind were ever immolated by the ancients. Rather, “among animals, the most precious for their utility were always chosen, the sweetest [*les plus doux*], the most innocent, the ones closest to man by their instincts and habits . . . , the most *human* victims, if one may express oneself in this way.”²⁵ This dual identification of humanity and the ideal sacrificial victim with active kindness and sweetness—or, more accurately, with French *douceur*, with all its connotations of moderation, calm, lack of harshness, and lack of violence²⁶—derives from Plato. In his *Registres de lecture*, Maistre noted the passage of *The Laws* where Plato observes that “MAN IS NATURALLY A DOUX ANIMAL, and if he receives a good education, an animal *doux* and divine. But if he is educated badly or not enough, [he is] the most ferocious animal in the universe.”²⁷ The opposite of the divisive passions unleashed by the soul, *douceur* results from the spiritual unity enforced by the will. The perfect, willingly suffering victim is antithetical to duplicitous humanity in its fallen condition, and emblematic of humanity in its higher, angelic state.

Platonic *douceur* is not politically innocent, but the mystical basis of a Christian politics of freedom and submission. A comparison of sacrificial practices in Christian and non-Christian societies shows that knowledge of divine *douceur* is the Christian’s prerogative, the one that dictated Christianity’s abolition of the human sacrifices practiced universally before its arrival. Because Christian individuals can willingly quell the soul’s impulses, they can live in *douceur* like willing victims. Sacrifice in Christian societies is therefore not institutionalized, and the individual Christian’s freedom develops

25. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 813.

26. “Douceur,” in Rey and Robert, *Le grand Robert de la langue française*, 2:1674.

27. Maistre, “Plato: *De legibus*,” in *Extraits F*; in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J15, 26.

in obedience to authority. The “*law of love*” that embodies the divine will’s *doux* quieting of sentence watches over Christian nations from the cradle. Nothing proved this better than the suspension of this law during the French Revolution, when the universe witnessed

the holy laws of humanity struck down; innocent blood covering the scaffolds that covered France; men curling and powdering bloody heads, and even the mouths of women stained with human blood.

This is *natural* man! [I]t is not that he does not carry within him the inextinguishable germs of truth and virtue: his birthrights cannot be prescribed; but without divine fecundation, these germs will never shine forth, or will only produce equivocal and unhealthy beings.²⁸

Christian *douceur* removed, humanity turns ferocious, as Plato predicted, and violent revolution becomes the supreme antisacrifice. Political action within the bounds of the law, and in submission to authority, is the opposite of this; and Maistre recommended it. As he explained to the Sardinian minister of foreign affairs in 1816:

As long as supreme authority deliberates, one must attempt to show it the truth, even with some danger: when it has made its decision, one must fall silent and make it be respected. Of all the beautiful things that Bossuet has said, one of the most beautiful is this one: Is it not in order to fight for legitimate authority that one suffers everything at its hands without murmuring?²⁹

This kind of politics still harbors violence; but it is self-directed.

The *Éclaircissement*’s sacrifice-submission/antisacrifice-revolt duality was far from novel. At least six centuries before, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) had already declared that religious rituals and especially sacrifice “induce men to have reverence for the divine worship” and to recognize divine sovereignty.³⁰ Maistre’s innovation was to lend historical abilities to submission by correlating individuals and societies. Here Saint-Martin’s *Lettre à un ami* was again inspiring. It affirmed that “the current epoch is the crisis and the convulsion of human powers expiring, and struggling against a new power, natural and alive.”³¹ One is reminded of a sick person seized with fever, and in fact Saint-Martin refers to the Revolution as a purgative illness:

28. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 824.

29. OC, 13:361.

30. Thomas Aquinas, “Treatise on Law,” *Summa theologiae*, q. 102 a. 5.

31. Saint-Martin, *Lettre à un ami*, 17.

The Providential “hand,” like that of a skilled surgeon, has removed the foreign body, and we are experiencing all the inevitable consequences of a painful operation, as well as the ills attached to the dressing of the wound; but we must bear with patience and with courage these pains, since there is none that does not bring us to health.³²

It is a curiosity and an indication of Maistre’s character that he became extremely fond of this comparison of Saint-Martin’s. Throughout his works and correspondence and until his death, he wrote of rebellions, professions of adherence to atheism, *philosophie*, or even religious skepticism in the language of fever, delirium, and convulsion.³³

The ravaging illness, the violent abnormality brought on by the loss of spiritual control over the body, allows the sentient principle seated in the blood to take over the whole human being. Saint-Martin’s opinion that these episodes were unfortunate but vital, both signs of illness and contributions to spiritual healing, was also historicized by Maistre, who turned sacrifice into a historical motor. The *Considérations*’ suggestion that historical phases of tranquillity are followed by shorter, critical periods of punitive but remedial suffering acquires ontological origins in the *Éclaircissement*’s divided self. Ages of freedom and peaceful progress are those of spirit’s mastery over body; while those of revolutionary destruction denote the tyranny of the soul’s impulses.

Recent history had witnessed the offering of one perfect and *doux* victim who might have helped attenuate the tyranny and destruction of the age that condemned him. What made Maistre’s theory of violence historically compelling—and consoling to royalists in the political climate of the Restoration—was that it lent the death of the martyr-king Louis XVI (1754–93) socially progressive powers, integrating it, implicitly, into the larger divine story of cosmic salvation by sacrifice. Maistre had speculated on the redemptive qualities of the royal sacrifice at least since the *Considérations*, where he wrote that “there might have been in the heart of Louis XVI, in that of the heavenly Elizabeth, a movement, an acceptance capable of saving France.”³⁴ With the years, his fascination with royally procured salvation grew as his notebooks filled with documents pertaining to royal deaths. He

32. Ibid., 73.

33. See, e.g., Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple*, 198, 200; OC, 1:274; OC, 3:325, 332–33; OC, 6:159, 267, 468; OC, 9:252–53; OC, 10:7, 96, 496; OC, 11:323; OC, 12:47, 327, 464; OC, 13:120, 190; Maistre to Uvarov, n.d., *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, 74.

34. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 218. Maistre quoted this passage again in *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 709.

noted down minute accounts of the death of Czar Paul I (1754–1801).³⁵ He kept also a “Fac simile du testament de Louis XVI”³⁶ that appeared during the Restoration and whose authenticity is debated to this day; a copy of a “Billet écrit par Madame Elisabeth dans la tour du Temple, et envoyé à Sa Majesté Louis XVIII avec le cachet royal de Sa Majesté Louis XVI”;³⁷ Jean Cléry’s *Journal de ce qui s’est passé à la tour du Temple pendant la captivité de Louis XVI, Roi de France* (1798); and a “Précis des derniers momens de la vie de Sa Majesté Marie Joséphine Louise, princesse de Savoie, reine de France, décédée au château d’Hartwell, dans le comté de Buckingham, le 13 9^{bre} 1810.”³⁸ In 1809, the same year he was reading Origen, Maistre also completed his thought from the *Considérations* by reflecting that when Louis XVI said, “Lord, forgive my people” on the scaffold, he showed that he was filled with the Spirit³⁹—as Christ and the men of desire had been when they sanctified the universe. Ivan Strenski has likewise noted *Les soirées*’ references to Louis XVI as a Christlike victim.⁴⁰ These images were pervasive in Catholic royalism: Louis XVI himself probably thought that he was following in Jesus’ footsteps when he consecrated France and himself to the Sacred Heart in preparation for his death.

The Will to Be Christ; or, Sacrifice Is Not a Gift

Yet Maistrian sacrifice is far more than a concrete corrective to historical catastrophe. It is the primal human activity. As such, it inverts materialist discourses on sacrifice. Jaucourt’s narrative had assumed three things: that sacrifice evolved and may be classified according to the vegetable, animal, or human identity of the offering; that major transitions between varieties of sacrifice happened not so much as a function of the place that sacrificial practice occupied within human relations and society, and even less in the human–divine relationship, but Epicurean–style through discrete, sometimes quotidian accidents (war, animal trampling, cannibalism⁴¹), the violent results of which were later repeated systematically; that sacrifice developed uniformly throughout the world, as human beings left a natural state of utilitar-

35. See “Paul I^{er},” *Russie*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J10, 1–19.

36. *Notes sur la révolution française, Russie*, *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J16, 4ff.

37. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

38. *Ibid.*, 7ff.

39. “1809,” *Extraits G*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J16, 40.

40. See Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice*, 43.

41. Edme Mallet, “Anthrophophages,” in D’Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 1:498.

ian reason—exemplified by savage societies devoid of power relations—for a passional one of civilization, mirrored in the sacrifice of sentient beings.⁴²

Maistre's counternarrative relied on the verbal spiritualism that his former master Jean-Baptiste Willermoz developed against materialists, utilitarians, and sensualists, especially Locke. In the *Instruction secrète des grands profès* (n.d.), his main mystical work and the founding text of the RER, Willermoz denounced eighteenth-century theorists who "tried to confuse [the] active and powerful word, with passive sounds, which some have liked to call the language of animals."⁴³ In a letter to Maistre of 1780, where he explained the RER's metaphysics, Willermoz referred to the spoken word as the "sensible expression of everything," and affirmed that "it is only by reason of the sublimity of its effects, of which one often abuses, that man is the sole being in sensible nature endowed with it."⁴⁴ This was the doctrine at the root of Maistre's denigration of the written word, and exaltation of the spoken one—since the spoken word was closest to God's Logos. Willermoz was not simply interested in lending activity, efficaciousness, and complete expressivity to the Word as a spiritualist alternative to Lockean materialism. He also wanted to justify the RER's mythography, whose reputed descent from the Knights Templar Maistre doubted openly and consistently.⁴⁵ To sidestep his historical objections, Willermoz argued that if language is the key to man's spiritual exaltation and the materialized version of everything including God, it can, in the form of myth and regardless of factuality, become the sacred repository of divine revelation.

In the *Éclaircissement*, Maistre applies Willermoz's reasoning on language to ritual, with spiritualist consequences even more far-reaching than those of his former master. Like Willermoz, Maistre believes the Word to be active and divine; and uniquely, he justifies this belief by identifying the spoken word with thought or the movement of spirit.⁴⁶ Also, in a philosophical move that would have supported the Willermozian doctrine he contested

42. Louis de Jaucourt, "Victime humaine," in D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 17:240–43.

43. Willermoz, *Instruction secrète des grands profès*, ed. Antoine Faivre, in René Le Forestier, *La franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste* (Paris: Montaigne, 1970), 1037.

44. Ibid., 69.

45. For an account of Maistre's correspondence with the RER's leaders, see Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 58–60. Faivre and Rebotton have published surviving letters of Willermoz and Gaspard de Savaron, one of the *Elected Cohen*, to Maistre in Maistre, *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, 63–74.

46. For Maistre's identification of word and thought, see Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: Logos and Logomachy."

the most—that the RER’s institutions and rituals preserve primordial divine revelation—Maistre assumes that the Word’s activity is manifested not only by its pronouncement or encapsulation in myth but also by its representation and acting out in ritual. This is the basis of the *Éclaircissement*’s spiritualist vindication of the primacy of sacrifice, and more generally of ritual, over every aspect of life.

Rather than give chronological and etiological priority to the quotidian like Jaucourt, Maistre derives the quotidian from sacrificial ritual as the most primal human activity. Commenting on the Homeric practice of throwing the first bits of a meal into the flames, the German Hellenist Christian Gotlob Heyne (1729–1812) reasoned that sacrifice must have originated in the ceremonial presents of food that opened meals, since the “first bits” the gods received probably included meat. To this Maistre objects that

it is not a matter . . . of a *present*, of an *offering*, of *first bits* . . . of a simple act of homage and gratitude, rendered . . . to divine *suzerainty*; since men, if this were true, would have sent to the butcher’s for the meats to be offered on the altars [and] been content to repeat in public, and with the suitable pomp, this very ceremony that opened their domestic repasts.⁴⁷

Sacrifice requires a live victim. The “artificial victim,” or earthen sacrificial substitute to which Jaucourt devotes one of the *Encyclopédie*’s articles,⁴⁸ does not interest Maistre. And sacrifices are not extensions of ἀπαρχαί, or meal openings. Rather, ἀπαρχαί are reduced sacrifices. Maistre believed that, historically, the great religious rituals and ceremonies always preceded the small. When, in his *Essai sur les mystères d’Eleusis* (1816), Uvarov claimed that in ancient Greece “the small mysteries had undoubtedly preceded the great ones,” Maistre observed that the proposition seemed to him to “contradict the nature of things,” and adduced the historical development of Freemasonry as evidence.⁴⁹ Also, by contrast with Jaucourt’s victims, Maistre’s are not accidental arrivals in a ritual or quotidian context, but that context’s essential determinants. This is why it is so important that victims be innocent: as Christ proved, they can move history.

The primacy of sacrifice established, it remains to render it ubiquitous. To do this, Maistre leans again on Saint-Martin. Replacing the suffering

47. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 825.

48. D’Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 17:243.

49. Maistre to Uvarov, December 22, 1813, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu* 1810–1852, 74.

men of desire who sanctified the universe with the Christian martyrs, and the surpassing of Christ after his death with “diminished” versions of Jesus’ death achieved in attempts to imitate him, Maistre argues that martyrdoms were “*differently similar*” to the sacrifices men performed for their nations—different presumably in that they were offered up to God; similar in that they were self-transcending and effective in the world. Simultaneously, though, Christian sacrifices differ from all other forms in being voluntarily dolorous and thereby supremely efficacious. The Christian victim strives to actually *become* the Christ in the act of martyrdom. Unlike the enemies and prisoners who were often immolated in ancient sacrifices, the Christian victim is a willing one, and in desiring not only death itself but the many deaths of suffering, s/he is not only *doux*, but capable of overcoming evil:

Under the empire of [the] divine law, the just man (who never believes that he is [just]) . . . tries to approach his model the painful way. He examines himself, he purifies himself, he makes efforts on himself that seem to surpass humanity, to obtain finally the grace of being able to *return what he has not stolen*.⁵⁰

The dogma that Christians should emulate Christ through self-sacrifice or participation in rituals similarly expiatory on a universal scale was a staple of baroque spirituality. In France, it was extensively developed in the theology of the ardent Cartesian and Oratorian founder Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629), whose Christocentric spirituality focused on the mystery of the Incarnation and preached adherence to Jesus through self-dispossession. The bearing of this theology on Maistre’s thought on sacrifice has until now gone unmentioned.

In his early *Bref discours de l’abnégation intérieure* (1597), Bérulle argued that Jesus’ Incarnation had been a supreme act of abnegation, indeed of self-annihilation (κένωσις). Far from being a historically discrete event, the Incarnation had endured as an efficacious mystery most active during the sacrament of the Mass and capable even, as Bérulle assured in his *Traité des énergumènes* (1599), of mediating relations between men and demons. Anticipating Maistrian themes, Bérulle argued that “the Incarnation is the original, and our Eucharist is like the copy and extract of it”⁵¹ that makes it possible for humanity to participate in the union of Christ’s body and soul:

50. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 834.

51. Pierre de Bérulle, “Du dessein du fils de Dieu en l’institution de l’Eucharistie,” *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Michel Dupuy (Paris: Cerf, 1995–97), 6:329.

As he then elevated human nature in singular fashion to divine hypostatic union⁵² through the Incarnation, we too can say in a certain way that he elevates our person and makes it take part in the order and in the state of that union divine and admirable through the mystery of the Eucharist.⁵³

But the humanity that the Eucharist elevated to the divine order was not a passive one. Although embodying God's giving to humanity, the Eucharist also enacted humanity's reciprocal giving to God: "Jesus Christ is the gift of men to God, as he is the gift of God to men; as sacrament, he is the one; as sacrifice he is the other. In other times we offered to God the fruits of the earth that was given to us; and now we offer to God a fruit of God himself."⁵⁴ The spiritually regenerative union between humanity and God in suffering was not, however, achieved solely through ritual performance: Bérulle's mysticism also treasured the heart as the affective meeting place between God and man.⁵⁵

Despite some hostility between their order and the Oratorians, the Jesuits grew to admire Bérullian theology and became especially attached to its sacramental Christology. The Jesuit cult of the Sacred Heart, that centerpiece of rococo religion, was inspired largely by Bérullian mysticism. Yet in the Jesuits' rather non-Augustinian, nonintellectualist, emotional, and devotional world, union with the sacrificial Christ of the Eucharist was achieved less by understanding the logic of sacramental reciprocity than by totally identifying with his suffering being. Bérulle's economic language of mutual gift giving was replaced with a passionate reassertion of the salvific power of sacrifice through submission and suffering.

Maistre does not appear to have read Bérulle. But as the theology of the *École française de spiritualité*, the ideas of the Oratorian founder marked Francophone Catholicism ineradicably, and Maistre could have learned about them in any number of ways. Bérulle's intellectual legacy to Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran (1581–1643), and through him to Port-Royal, was one possible channel. More important was the Oratorian connection with the Jesuits via the cult of the Sacred Heart: the mysticism of the

52. "Hypostatic union" refers to the theological belief that "in Christ one person subsists in two natures, the Divine and the human. *Hypostasis* means, literally, that which lies beneath as basis or foundation." "Hypostatic Union," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610b.htm> (accessed May 19, 2009).

53. Bérulle, "De la Présence du corps de Jésus-Christ," *OC*, 6:296.

54. Bérulle, "De l'Eucharistie," *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:328.

55. See Bérulle, *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:273, and *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:179, 377–79; *Oeuvres complètes*, 4:93, 142, 149, 195, 260, 270, 284, 286, 299, 300, 361, 415, 428, 453, 455, and 534.

Jesuit Saint Francis de Sales, with whose spirituality eighteenth-century Savoyard religious life, and Maistre's education, were so infused, drew on Bérullian doctrine. Not accidentally, it was Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647–90), a nun from the Order of the Visitation Francis founded, who started the cult of the Sacred Heart. Although Maistre pays no written tribute to it, Francis's adaptation of Bérullian theology—and especially his idea that spiritual action originates in the will to self-annihilation—was probably the most direct source of the *Éclaircissement's* theology of Christian sacrifice.

Reflecting on the social consequences of these ideas, Maistre argued that sacrifice, rather than derive from the quotidian, invades it. The *doux* individual who emulates Christ performs sacrifice every time he is just. This is why live sacrifices are unneeded in Christian societies, and why the abuse of sacrifice that characterized antiquity is largely unknown in modernity. Yet if sacrifice is to be truly ubiquitous, it has to be performed beyond the human realm. Bérulle had already suggested that the Incarnation connected humanity with demons. But Maistre aims to describe the spiritual communication among all beings in the universe. And to do so, he forays into myth.

Huet's Myths vis-à-vis Figurist Symbolism

“What truth is not found in paganism?” This is the question that opens the *Éclaircissement's* final chapter. Maistre answers it with a rather curious—and, coming from him, startling—list of pagan “truths.” “It is quite true,” he says, “that there are many *gods* and many *lords*, in heaven as well as on earth, and that we must aspire to the favor of all these *gods*.”⁵⁶ It is also true, he goes on, that Jupiter is above all these gods; that he must be adored with Pallas and Juno; that, as Plato said, there is a God of present and future things, and a Lord, chief of causes; and that, as Origen maintained, there are three kings, one of first things, another of second things, and a third of third things—the Father embracing all that exists, the Son being limited to intelligent beings, and the Spirit to the elect. It is further true that Minerva sprang out of Jupiter's brain and that Venus emerged from the sea—since the sentient principle must arise from water, as the Vedic story of Brahma's sliding on the waters on top of a lotus leaf at the beginning of things confirms; that Venus returned to the water during the deluge, when “*everything became sea and the sea was without shores*; and that she went to sleep at the bottom of the waters.”⁵⁷ Nor is this all: it is true that we all have a genie, that each nation and city has a

56. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 828.

57. Ibid., 829–30.

patron, that Neptune commanded the winds, and that the gods eat nectar and ambrosia—as the angel Raphael’s eating and drinking of invisible meats and beverages in the book of Tobias testifies. Finally, it is true that “when a man is ill, one must try to *enchant* softly the evil with *powerful words*,⁵⁸ without nevertheless neglecting the means of natural medicine,” in deference to the truth that “medicine and *divination* are very close relatives.”⁵⁹

Putting pagan myth on an exegetical par with scripture and resorting to myth for sacred “truths” are theological moves evoking the paganist sympathies of Pierre-Daniel Huet, one of Maistre’s unstudied sources. Alone of the classical theological trio he composed with Bossuet and Fénelon, Huet contradicted the anti-Platonism that prevailed in his century,⁶⁰ discerning in pagan cults and beliefs correspondences with Christian dogma and practices. An accidental cause may be first adduced for these opinions. When Huet was only twenty-two, he accompanied his tutor Samuel Bochart (1599–1667) on a visit to Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–89) and discovered in her library Origen’s previously unknown *Commentary on Saint Matthew*. The enthusiasm that the unearthing of this text produced in Huet drove him to labor for the next fifteen years on the famed *Origenis in sacras scripturas commentaria, quaecumque graece reperiri potuerunt* (1668). Including an erudite intellectual biography of Origen, a thorough account of his influence on later centuries, an analysis of his major doctrines and style, and an edited compilation of his commentaries translated into Latin, the *Origeniana* revived long-dead interest in Origen throughout Europe. Its composition was formative for Huet, and planted the seeds of his mature theology. Origen beckoned to Platonic and pagan interpretations of Christianity, and through these to a Pelagian view of spirit as the fount of religion.

Huet’s Origenism, however, took time to grow. As a young man he had been an ardent Cartesian, which at the time had meant siding with Plato, Augustine, and therefore with the Benedictines, Jansenists and Oratorians, against the Aristotelian Scholasticism mastered by the Jesuits and the Sorbonne doctors. These were no idle theological tastes. Scholastics and Augustinians waged a war over the soul of France, which for many meant exile, broken careers, suicide from spiritual desperation, and lifelong friendships lost.⁶¹ But with time Huet came to renounce his youthful beliefs, his mind probably changed, among other things, by the ideas of the Jesuits, with whom he associated

58. A reference to Martinist theurgy, or the art of commanding the spirits with magical words.

59. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 831.

60. Jacqueline Lichtenstein, “Socrate à la cour de Louis XIV,” *XVIIe siècle* 150 (1986): 3–17.

61. Alan Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650–1729* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. 265–96.

closely during the last decades of his life. A letter Huet received from a Jesuit missionary to Maduras suggests, for instance, that he became willing to believe that non-Christian cultures possess fragments of spiritual truth. Intending “to prove that the Indians borrow’d their religion from the books of Moses and the prophets,” the Jesuit narrated an oral tale of the Indian Job as evidence.⁶²

Whatever the causes of his conversion, Huet became one of the most articulate anti-Cartesians France ever produced—in the *Censura philosophiae cartesianae* (1689). But it was an odyssey that plunged him first into extreme skepticism with fideistic consequences—most notably expressed in his *De imbecillitate mentis humanae libri tres* (1723), which Maistre read admiringly; and which, importantly for our purposes, led to ancient naturalism as a viable alternative to the Cartesians’ mechanical world of punctual laws decreed by an absent God. When in the *Censura* Huet pointed out Descartes’ failure to distinguish beings-in-the-mind from beings-in-the-world (*a parte intellectus* versus *a parte rei*), he was not simply defending traditional Aristotelian naturalism, but opening the door to the entire Neoplatonic tradition and to any pagan model of the world as animate.

A century and a half later, as he wandered through Europe and the French revolutionary decade drew to a close, Maistre trod down Huet’s path, beginning his studies of Platonism with the reading of Origen,⁶³ to whom he returned yet again in 1809 in Saint Petersburg.⁶⁴ But Maistre went far beyond Huet. The Savoyard had to counter the radical Enlightenment of the *Encyclopédistes*, Augustine’s distant descendants through Bayle, by appealing to reason. To this end, the theology of one of the Christian adversaries against whom Augustine had crafted the philosophy of Latin Christendom could be exceedingly useful. Origen, in fact, helped Maistre meet the Enlightenment on its own ground—to devise, in fact, a late, religious form of Enlightenment that shattered the logic of *philosophie*.⁶⁵ Huet had been more

62. This letter was published in an anonymous English translation in *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World* (Hartford, 1731–39), 3:397–407. See David J. A. Clines, “In Search of the Indian Job,” in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967–1998* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 2:773.

63. The first entries on Origen in Maistre’s notebooks are dated 1797.

64. See Maistre, “Origène,” *Extraits G*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J16, 346–56.

65. On the convergence of Origenism and Enlightenment in Maistre’s thought, see Aimee E. Barbeau, “The Savoyard Philosopher: Deist or Neoplatonist?” and Carolina Armenteros, conclusion, in Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 161–90 and 221–30, respectively. On Maistre’s Origenism more generally, see also Elcio Verçosa Filho, “The Pedagogical Nature of Maistre’s Thought” (191–220), and Douglas Hedley, “Enigmatic Images of an Invisible World” (125–46), in the same volume.

modest. In the *Origeniana* he had scrupulously published only the writings of Origen the exegete and not those of Origen the speculative Platonist. For of the two Origenes it was the latter—sketched using *Contra Celsum* and *De principii*—that most caused trouble to his modern European defenders.⁶⁶ Less worried, in his day, by ecclesiastical censorship, and bent on crafting a polemically powerful theory, Maistre became principally interested in Origen the philosopher—as his notebook entries and the *Éclaircissement*'s mythography suggest. He thus became the first modern Catholic thinker to incorporate Neoplatonic cosmology into theodicy, and to take serious theological interest in Origen's speculative writings. Hence the *Éclaircissement*'s mythography, and the senator's declaration, in *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, "that the whole of paganism is nothing but a system of truths corrupted and displaced; that it is enough to *clean* them, . . . and to put them back in their place in order to see them shine with all their rays."⁶⁷

The belief that myth is a container of hidden *doxa*, or collective truths common to humankind, had also been defended by Saint-Martin.⁶⁸ It was the basis of the "form of traditionalism" that Frank Paul Bowman has associated with early Romantic mythography,⁶⁹ and that accompanied, along with Huetian and more generally Jesuit paganist sensibilities, Maistre's belief in the Catholicity of all myth. But Maistre put his own very personal stamp on mythic "truth," rendering it inherently authoritarian and historically efficacious. Maistrian myth is above all important for modeling the spiritual government of the cosmos and the role that the free spirits inhabiting the universe have played in history's great events. Thus Venus's sleep on the ocean bottom symbolizes the quieting of sentience in the consummate sacrifice of the Flood. Similarly, Neptune's command of the winds prefigures Jesus' in the Gospels and represents the submission of physical phenomena to the spirit. In thus attributing efficacy and freedom to the world's spirits, Maistrian mythography differs markedly from the Martinists'. The latter systematically supposed that the unknown structure of the universe corresponds to known structures like those of human beings, and considered these analogies to be sacred. They also believed that universal development was of only ancillary relevance to spiritual progress. For them, salvation proceeded from an inner light, not from action in the world.

66. Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, Beisler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft (Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1979), 233.

67. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 766.

68. Frank Paul Bowman, "Illuminism, Utopia, Mythology," in *The French Romantics*, ed. D. G. Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 96.

69. *Ibid.*, 79.

Maistre reverses this order of spiritual priority. For him analogy and mythical allegory are to be used sparingly as simple aids to modeling universal order and development and gaining insight into specific spiritual action. This was an old opinion of his: the *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick* already criticized Masonic allegory on grounds that “the type that represents many things represents nothing,”⁷⁰ so that, by implication, each symbol should represent one certain fact rather than acquire a multitude of false and vague meanings. The *Éclaircissement* hence equates each mythic truth with a single historical event or process. According to Maistre, what it truly matters to know about the universe is not the structural similarity relating spiritual beings to one another but the etiology of universal historical movement. Briefly put, where the illuminists remained cosmosophists, presupposing divine knowledge to be inherent in the world’s structure and apprehensible through symbolic analogy, Maistre became a historical cosmologist, that is, a metaphysician attempting to divine how the universe develops through time in the process of acquiring a history. His mythography recalled the Pelagian and Huetian renditions of ancient naturalism. This is best appreciated by comparing it with the major symbological philosophy of history the French eighteenth century produced.

Out of the rubble of the monastery of Port-Royal rose the only explicit philosophy of history the Augustinian tradition ever produced: figurism. The timeless world of Pascal and Nicole gone, Jansenists sought to express their despair, their sense that the world had come to an end, through the narrative of a Christian history that would not end—all the while designing a rallying banner against the papal bull *Unigenitus*. Figurism also provided a solution to the most pressing exegetical problem of the time: the reconciliation of the literal and figurative meanings of scripture, which Bossuet, after burning the thirteen hundred published copies of the *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678) by the Oratorian Richard Simon (1638–1712), had not ceased to seek.⁷¹

It is not surprising that the abbé Léonard, a defender of the literal sense of scripture and the man who coined the word “figurism,”⁷² soon attacked the new historical theory for being Origenistic and falling into the excesses of the allegorical tradition. The accusation was understandable. The *Explica-*

70. Maistre, “Mémoire au duc de Brunswick,” in *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, 56.

71. Catherine Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation: Le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 167.

72. *Ibid.*, 165.

tion du mystère de la Passion de N. S. Jésus-Christ, suivant la concorde (1722) of Jacques-Joseph Duguet (1649–1733), the father of figurism, ascribed multiple symbolic meanings to episodes of scriptural history, past and future, in a manner consistent with Origen’s cosmosophy. Duguet suggested, for instance, that the Apocalypse would not necessarily come to pass only at the end of time, but might have already been realized in one way or another within historical time; which, in turn, did not prevent it from being realized anew at the end of days, or, for that matter, in any historical circumstance at all. For him, every historical event was laden with a multiplicity of possible portents of future events. By the same token, the subject of eschatology, rather than be enclosed within the time frame of the end days, as in traditional Christian symbolism, became distributed across a duration that had suddenly become open-ended. Jansenists could now understand why God had permitted the church to lose so severely to heresy in modernity, and the catastrophe of Protestantism to be crowned with the destruction of Port-Royal, without bringing the world to an end. Thanks to figurism, Duguet could reason that millennial prophecies were already coming to pass in his century, and hope that God would compensate present losses with future gains—like the Jews’ conversion.

Sometime slightly before 1682 Duguet had a conversation with archbishops Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704) and André-Hercule de Fleury (1653–1743) in which he exposed his system of interpretation. The three men agreed on the need for a “new people” that would renew the degraded times in which they lived—an idea generally diffused in the 1680s.⁷³ Duguet’s philosophy of history seems to have greatly impressed Bossuet, who altered the twentieth chapter of the *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* (1681) to add a passage of figurist inspiration. In it he suggested, contradicting Augustine, that the conversion of the Jews was at hand, that it would come to compensate for heresy, and that the world would nevertheless survive.⁷⁴ Also, in *L’Apocalypse avec une explication* (1699), Bossuet argued that all Christians, Catholic and Protestant, agreed that scripture is never exhausted with a single meaning, and that Christ had been prefigured repeatedly in the great characters of the Old Testament.⁷⁵ In Duguet’s figurism Bossuet finally found what he had been looking for: a Catholic, indeed a universally Christian, alternative to Protestant exegetical literalism. Armed with figurism, Bossuet

73. Ibid., 625n.

74. Ibid., 174.

75. Ibid., 167.

could convincingly point to the intellectual and spiritual impoverishment that resulted from interpreting the Apocalypse solely in light of the sack of Rome by Alaric, to the detriment of other meanings that could be found accomplished throughout history and at the end of history.

Curiously, the Jesuits in China used figurism to defend their syncretistic practices during the Chinese rites controversy.⁷⁶ Maistre may have become acquainted with figurist ideas either through Bossuet or through the works of these missionaries. His familiarity with Jesuit treatises on China is confirmed by his recommendation to Uvarov to read the eighteenth century's greatest Sinological work, the *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735) of Father Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743), as well as the *Lettre sur les caractères chinois* (1725) of Father Joseph de Mailla.⁷⁷

The *Éclaircissement's* mythology, however, is “figuristic” only in elaborating a theory of the symbolic relationships between the content of sacred texts and an extratextual, historical reality. The rest differs. Where figurism emphasizes the multiple symbolic meanings of scripture, Maistre discerns mythic “truths,” each possessed of a single symbolic denotation. Where figurism lends purely epistemic value to scriptural episodes, Maistre expresses an ontological order actually invested with historical efficacy. Such differences, in turn, are consequential for the relationship between knowledge, human freedom, and progress. Figurism makes no link between understanding of divine designs, like the recognition of a “new people,” and human historical agency. In this respect, the figurists remain loyal to the Augustinian theology of grace. Maistre's myths suggest, on the contrary, that in a world governed by spirits who all resemble each other, knowledge of the divine government of the universe can aid us, as spiritual beings, in governing the world spiritually ourselves. Awareness, for example, of the thaumaturgic connection between medicine and divination allows us to access the healing and divinatory power of words—as Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847), France's foremost Romantic mythographer, would later concur.

The Eucharist in the Universe

In Plato's *Laws*, the world's spirits are arranged in a single hierarchy, the highest class of which comprises the great gods and the stars, called ξῶα

AuQ1

76. Ibid., 170.

77. Maistre to Uvarov, October 8, 1810, Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu 1810–1852, 63.

(“animals” or “live beings”). In modernity, the ancient idea that the stars are both spiritual and alive had a long posterity in esoteric and Hermetic mysticism. But after the Copernican revolution, when the earth was no longer the universal center but one among many heavenly bodies, the Platonists’ single hierarchy of spirits transmuted into the Martinists’ plural worlds. The live stars were now not the highest rung in the universal hierarchy of spirits, but spiritual worlds of their own on a par with the earth. Like Plato’s ξῶα, Maistre’s illuminist stars possess a spirit and a soul, each of which is equipped with a body—the spirit’s body being the “glorious body” (πνευματικόν), and the soul’s being the physical body (φυσικόν).⁷⁸ Furthermore, being a world itself, each star contains its own hierarchy of spirits. The *Éclaircissement* proves less timid than *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* on this point. Whereas the latter simply suggests that the stars might be “bodies” moved, like the human body, by an attached intelligence,⁷⁹ the former denounces all theological objections to the doctrine of the plurality of worlds as nothing less than folly. Reasoning that all parts of the universe must be united under the empire of intelligence, Maistre asserts that planets are not only alive, but inhabited by extraterrestrials:

I cannot be sufficiently surprised at the strange scruples of certain theologians who refuse the hypothesis of the plurality of worlds, fearing that it might weaken the dogma of redemption; so that . . . we must believe that man traveling through space on his sad planet, miserably *cramped* between *Mars* and *Venus*, is the only intelligent being in the system, and that the other planets are nothing but globes *without life and without beauty* that the Creator has thrown into space to amuse himself . . . like a ball player. No, never has a more petty thought presented itself to the human mind! . . . Is there anything more certain than this proposition: *all has been made* by and for *intelligence*? Can a planetary system be anything else than a system of intelligences, and can each planet . . . be anything else than the abode of one of these families?⁸⁰

Importantly for the theory of sacrifice, if the world is filled with spiritual beings all similar in structure and all capable of expiation, then by the principle of continuity spiritual activity pervades the universe and the effects of sacrifice may be felt even in the stars. Saint-Martin had suggested something sim-

78. As Maistre indicates in a note to his translation of Plutarch’s *On the Delays of Divine Justice*, citing 1 Corinthians 15:44 (OC, 5:432n).

79. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 765.

80. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 835–36.

ilar with his doctrine of the sacralization of the universe through suffering; but Maistre follows Origen, whose *De principii* and *Contra Celsum* provide the mythico-historical precedent for the *Éclaircissement's* cosmic sacrifice.

De principii argued that the Creation was an act of overflowing love on God's part, during which he limited himself by creating rational and spiritual beings through the Logos. At first these rational souls were attached to God in adoring union with him. But at one point they literally got fed up with his goodness and entered a spiritual state of nausea that caused them to detach themselves and begin to fall away from him. As they fell, their temperature dropped—by God's side they had been fiery spirits—and became ψυχεία, or cooled-down intellects. Origen then explained the creation of the material world as God's reaction to the Fall: God saved the souls by trapping them in physical bodies as they went down, thereby stopping them from falling further. The different intellects had fallen at different speeds and were thus stopped at different spiritual levels—some became angels, others men, still others demons. The climax of Origen's cosmic myth is the Incarnation of the preexistent divine Logos, the one soul who had remained lovingly united with the Father, in a human body. This union was so intense that it was like that of body and soul, white-hot iron and fire, and destroyed, despite the freedom of Christ's soul, all inclination for change. Ultimately the Logos united within himself not only soul but also body—the Transfiguration. This was the consummate symbolic event in the history of a cosmos characterized by the struggle of the fallen souls to achieve transfigurations of their own. With time, all the world's souls will come to commune with God, freely under his loving grace. The return to God might take more or less time, depending on how the souls use their freedom. But given God's infinite goodness and wisdom, their eventual return to him is inevitable—as is their renewed fall and salvation, in an endless series of cosmic cycles.

As a Christian story, Origen's myth is ambiguous. It is ahistorical (one reason that Origen was posthumously condemned for heresy): the cycle of falls from and ascents to God by a constant number of precreated souls risks dissolving sacred history into timeless myth and engendering an extrahistorical spirituality. This, precisely, is why the Martinists liked it so much: as modern esotericists, their spirituality located spiritual reintegration in the “extra-historical interior volitional life of individual believers”;⁸¹ and like Origen, they looked on the Bible as a manual of symbols. At the same time, however, in a world filled with connected souls, and mixed in with Bérullian

81. McCalla, “French Romantic Philosophies of History,” 260.

Christocentrism, Origen's Incarnation can become the means of realizing the universe's historical telos. This is what the *Éclaircissement* does. It presents the Crucifixion as the paradigmatic event in the history of a universe that coheres by virtue of the ability of the souls populating it to be healed by blood:

The blood spilled on Calvary was useful not only to men but to the angels, the stars, and all created beings; which will not seem surprising to him who will remember what Saint Paul has said: *that it has pleased God to reconcile all things by him who is the principle of life, and the firstborn among the dead, having pacified by the blood he spilled on the cross, what is on earth as what is in heaven.* And if all creatures *groan*, why should they not be *consoled*?⁸² At the Crucifixion Christ's blood "*washed the universe*," as Origen believed, and began to cure all of Creation. Afterward—and concurrently with Bérulle's doctrine that the Mass perpetuates the Passion ritually—the Eucharist became a succession of mini-Incarnations or Passions:

It has come into the incomprehensible designs of all-powerful love to perpetuate until the world's end, and by means far above our feeble intelligence, that same sacrifice, materially offered only once for the salvation of the human species. *The flesh* having separated man from heaven, God had put on the flesh to unite with man . . . , but it was still too little for an immense goodness attacking an immense degradation. This divinized and perpetually immolated flesh is presented to man under the external appearance of his privileged nourishment.⁸³

The spiritual work of the Paschal sacrifice is completed by the renovating sacrifice of the Mass:

Like the word, which is nothing in the material realm but a series of circular undulations excited in the air, and similar on all imaginable planes to those that we perceive on the surface of the water struck at a point; as that word . . . arrives still in all its mysterious integrity, to every ear touched at every point of the agitated fluid, in the same way the corporeal essence of him who is called *word*, radiating from the center of the all-power, which is everywhere, enters whole into each mouth, and multiplies to infinity without dividing. Quicker than lightning, more active than thunder, the *theandric* blood penetrates the *guilty entrails* to devour their blemishes. It reaches to the unknown confines of those

82. Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 834.

83. *Ibid.*, 838.

two powers irreconcilably united where *the impulses of the heart* collide with intelligence and trouble it. By a true divine affinity, it seizes man's elements and transforms them without destroying them.⁸⁴

All beings in the world having the same structure and all tending toward the unity of body and soul, spilled blood quiets the impulses of the soul and unites the spiritual with the bodily across the cosmos, moving the universe.

Sacrifice has thus gone from perpetuating the Incarnation and being the depository of myth (as it was for Bérulle and the Martinists, respectively) to propelling history toward its end. History, in fact, is identical with salvation by sacrifice. The transitions between historical epochs are marked by great sacrifices: the Fall, the Flood, the Crucifixion, and an awful, consummate sacrifice augured by the antisacrifice of the French Revolution. Now a multiplicity of epochs, eternities, or ends of history within history might be dawning.⁸⁵ The task of the Christian, however, is not to know their precise number and mode of succession. What matters instead is to make the future by partaking in Christ's sacrifice through the Eucharist and willing to be like the Lamb of God. If before Christ the supreme sacrificial victim was the most "human," now Christ has revealed that the supremely human being is the one willing passionately to become the consummate sacrificial victim. Supreme Christianity becomes identical with the end of history: it consists, like supreme humanity, in the surpassing of humanity, in the continual strife for us to submit to the spirit so as to cease being humans—and become angels.

Mystical and cosmic though its themes are, the *Éclaircissement* fit in with Restoration politics. The ascent to the throne of a Catholic king who appeased the bourgeoisie with constitutional concessions engendered in Maistre the spiritual need to believe that the world in which he was living, a world where the Jansenists' written constitutions had triumphed, was not a world that would last.⁸⁶ The *Éclaircissement's* theory of sacrifice fulfilled precisely this need by suggesting that the everyday events of the reign of the lamb-king Louis XVI were actually eschatological moments of a divine story of cosmic salvation by sacrifice. More polemically—and more broadly—attributing historical and regenerative powers to the Crucifixion and its sacramental

84. Ibid.

85. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 764.

86. See OC, 13:244–45.

continuation in the Eucharist was the ultimate way to vindicate the Tridentine doctrine of transubstantiation—that the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood without changing in appearance—against the *Encyclopédie's* mockery⁸⁷ and much Protestantism.

The *Éclaircissement* is a historical progressivist text. While it does not use the word “progress,” it consistently alludes to the systematic, totalizing, radical, and rational improvement of the human condition. Like progress, Maistrian sacrifice—the most controlled and regulated form of violence—enables humans to advance continuously toward higher and higher stages, even unto rebirth. In this the *Éclaircissement* exceeds the Enlightenment. Where the *philosophes* had aspired to improve humanity physically and morally through reason, Maistre looks forward to the utter and essential *transformation* of humanity, out of itself and onto a higher state, through the reasoned and measured manipulation of violence.

This process produces a specific narrative. Man, having fallen and broken in three after disobeying God, lives in the world in pain and sin, divided between the passions emanating from his soul and the duties dictated by his spirit. From the beginning, however, his sacrificial instinct has urged him to reunite with God, himself, and his kind, saving him from further degradation and remitting for the guilt of his blood with the spilling of innocent blood.

When Christ died, his blood bathed the universe, purifying the cosmos. The Crucifixion, reenacted in the Eucharist, transforms the human body, calming the heart's impetuosity and uniting body, spirit, and soul. History henceforth marches toward universal, willed sacrifices that, if they do not assimilate body and soul into spirit and dissolve humanity into God, will at least end the human race as we know it and drive it to a higher sphere of spiritual existence. The role of Christian and non-Christian societies in universal regeneration is the loose end of the story. The economy of sacrificial substitution suggests one possible way to weave cosmology into history: a soul might again be spilled for a soul, the *doux* immolated for the criminal, Christian societies atone for non-Christian ones, and the elect of Origen's fancy stumble out of history bearing humanity on their shoulders.

It is in this urgent desire for change through annihilation, this insistence that the road back to God is paved with spilled blood and not with enlightening words, that Maistrian conservatism is ultimately revolutionary.

87. See Mallet, “Anthropophages,” in D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 1:498.

Author Query

1. Please review as first character of Greek 5 is not clear in code list.

CHAPTER 5

Returning the Universe to God

Time, Will, and Reason in Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg

Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg was Maistre's "cherished work," the one that he felt told everything he knew.¹ Labored on for twelve years, and still incomplete at his death in 1821, it is his masterpiece, a diffuse mystique that melds literary genres ancient and modern. It is a theodicy in the manner of Leibniz. It is a dialogue in the Platonic mold. And in combining literature with religious science as "so many 'addresses open toward heaven,'" ² it is perhaps the last great work in the French tradition of *humanisme dévot*. Its three characters, especially the count, resurrect major theological controversies of the French seventeenth century. Echoes of the old feuds between libertines and mystics, anthropocentrists and theocentrists, Jansenist panhedonists and Fénelon, all alone with his *pur amour*, reverberate throughout. The old quarrels are not always revived in accordance with orthodoxy. But they are so with relevance to the times, and with the power they eventually displayed of changing views of universal history. The philosophical influences and literary genres that came together in it respond to a philosophical question urgently posed by the Revolution: How does the human will determine history? This chapter explores *Les soirées'* answer to

1. OC, 14:250.

2. Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France: Depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: A. Colin, 1924–33), 1:225.

this question in intellectual context. It analyzes how it blends speculative Platonism with Augustinianism, the enemies of almost two centuries, to devise a rationalist, morally progressivist, and potentially historicizing cosmology animated by a nearly unbounded faith in the power of human beings to craft their own destiny.

Les soirées is a work of Enlightenment. Despite its return to antiquity, it constitutes the completion, within Maistre's oeuvre, of the project, first conceived against Rousseau in 1794, to vindicate the primacy of the moral over the physical. *Les soirées'* characters know well the intellectual currents of their time. The senator is an imaginative and generous *illuminé* deeply versed in the religious lore of antiquity and Asia. He is the alter ego of the count, the "severe . . . apostle of unity and authority"³ who acts as an old-school father-pedagogue to the young French knight sympathetic to the ideas of the century of lights.⁴ The senator's syncretistic visions of future human unity evoke the spiritual universalism of some forms of Enlightenment and especially the Jesuit dream of uniting Orient and Occident, tradition and modernity, under the banner of a single faith. Indeed, throughout the book a rather Jesuit vision of the East as morally upright and rationally ordered underpins the notion that spiritual reason is the inheritance of all humankind.

Les soirées proposes that cosmic spiritual progress arises out of the intersection between particular and universal—interchangeably represented by symbols, rituals, mysteries, souls, and mystic numbers. This theme recalls the *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick* of 1782, where Maistre suggested that illuminist symbology might save the Stricte Observance Templièr (SOT), mother organization of the RER, from the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics that raged in its midst, and particularly from disagreements regarding the Eucharist: "If our theologians wished to reflect attentively that the words *mystery*, *sacrament*, *sign*, and *figure* are rigorously synonymous, they would soon lead us to sign an agreement on one of the points that divide our two communions."⁵ Political unity would follow ecumenical unity: the rest of the *Mémoire* envisages the unified Freemasonry of the future prevailing on governments to pursue policies inspired by a Christian ethics of generosity and compassion, and encouraging international cooperation and brotherhood between Christian governments.

3. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 767.

4. For an analysis of the relationship between the three characters, see Pierre Glaudes, introduction to *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 434–37.

5. Maistre, *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick*, 110.

The *Mémoire* did not reach the Duke of Brunswick (1735–1806) in time. When it arrived, the Convent of Wilhelmsbad had commenced, and the disintegration of the SOT a few years later dispelled the vision of ritual and symbolic community that Maistre shared with his Mason brothers. Yet twenty years later in Saint Petersburg, this vision seemed close to becoming real, as rituals, mysteries, and signs became themes central to a mystical revival, and Russia initiated the Holy Alliance, whose attempt to institute Christian brotherhood between governments very much resembled the one young Maistre had recommended in the *Mémoire*. The *Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis* that Sergei Uvarov sent to Maistre in 1812 during the composition of *Les soirées* also rendered the Sardinian envoy nostalgic for his RER days. In the letter he wrote back to Uvarov, he compared the ancient mysteries discussed in the *Essai* with the Freemasonic rites that he had once hoped would unite the Christian world.⁶ Other influences reinforced these memories. Maistre's Polish nationalist friend, Count Jan Potocki (1761–1815), probably introduced him to the symbolological Russo-Polish mysticism then in full swing in Eastern Europe. Awaiting an imminent Christian rebirth, this narrative announced that Christ's kingdom had been gradually realized on earth ever since the Incarnation, and that present mysteries, symbolized by the Gospel's mustard seed that dies to bear fruit, were incarnated in partitioned Poland, the nation-grain called by God to be resurrected, give birth to the Slavic nation, and renew world Christianity. The cycle reached its peak with the messianism of Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), who, having encountered Martinism in Saint Petersburg through the poet and painter Józef Oleszkiewicz (1777–1830), became convinced that God had appointed him as Poland's prophet. In *The Book of the Polish Pilgrims* (1832), Mickiewicz foretold that suffering Poland would be to materialist Europe what Christ had been to the whole sinful world.

Illuminism aside, the theme of the resurrecting grain that incarnates at once continuity and plenitude had its philosophical equivalent in Leibniz's monads, those ever-mutating, universe-moving, consummate individuals and protagonists of the *Essais de théodicée* (1710) and *Monadologie* (1714). Maistre himself read Leibniz devotedly,⁷ and once “jumped with joy” on learning from Bonald that Leibniz's *Metaphysische Abhandlung* (1686) was favorable to

6. Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu 1810–1852, 74.

7. The *Registres de lecture* contain extensive notes, dated 1808, on the *Oeuvres philosophiques, latines et françaises* (Amsterdam: Jean Schreuder, 1765) and the *Pensées de Leibnitz sur la religion et la morale* (Paris: Vve Nyon/Société typographique, 1803).

Catholicism.⁸ Not surprisingly, then, *Les soirées* is profoundly influenced by Leibnizian theodicy, which Maistre imbibed not only from Leibniz's works but also from the *Palingénésie philosophique; ou, Idées sur l'état passé et sur l'état futur des êtres vivans* (1769) of the Leibnizian Platonist Charles Bonnet (1720–93). Adapting the theory of the monad to a model of biological death and resurrection, Bonnet argued that the Platonic glorious body contained a number of “little organic bodies,” or germs, one of which, on destruction of the physical body, developed another body. His palingenesis is a historical biological variation on the Origenist doctrine of apocatastasis, whereby the soul after death remains united with an ethereal body, making up a seed that on God's signal develops into the glorious body destined to share the soul's eternal felicity. The grain, then, that ancient topos of esoteric mysticism and speculative cosmology, was a focus of late eighteenth-century biological mysticism, which Maistre consumed also in *La palingénésie et la résurrection des plantes appliquée à la résurrection de notre corps* (1783) of Louis Maeglin (dates unknown). In *Les soirées*, however, the grain appeared traditionally garbed as the active soul, whose past lay in Augustinian Platonism.

Original Sin in Succession: The Passive Body and the Wounded Will

In the first book of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum* (412), Augustine defined original sin as the passage to mortality.⁹ Adam in the Garden of Eden had a mortal body subject to aging and death. Yet although his body was mortal, Adam could live forever, thanks to the tree of life, which prevented him from growing old and becoming ill. In this state, Adam resembled the prophets Elias and Enoch, whose bodies were kept from senile consumption despite the many years of their owners. Had Adam continued to live in justice and peace, a glorious body would have emerged from his mortal body to envelop him. Thus clothed and attired, he would have reached the state of purity promised to the saints: his spirit would have reigned over his flesh, and everything mortal in him would have been absorbed by life. But when Adam sinned, he lost his glorious body, or, more precisely, the capacity to develop one. The tree of life stopped infusing spiritual strength into him, so that he began to age, and became bound to die.

8. OC, 12:474.

9. See Augustine of Hippo, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum ad Marcellinum libri tres*, trans. Philip Schaff, *Documenta catholica omnia*.

The philosophically inclined in the early nineteenth century resorted rarely to the doctrine of original sin to explain physical or temporal phenomena: “The concept of original sin is the common opponent against which all the different trends of the philosophy of the Enlightenment join forces. In this struggle Hume is on the side of English deism, and Rousseau of Voltaire; the unity of the goal seems for a time to outweigh all differences as to the means of attaining it.”¹⁰ The contrary tendency was commonplace, however, in Masonic and mystical milieus. The Martinist cosmogony that Willermoz taught his adepts of the RER certainly emphasized in traditional Gnostic fashion (and Origen-style) that the emanated spirits, the primeval androgynous Adam included, had been locked up in matter through their own fault.¹¹ It was a myth at least as old as Plato’s *Symposium*, with its story of how the gods had sexed primitive, androgynous humanity to punish it for its rebellions. And the Martinists were not the only eighteenth-century mystics who taught that the body is a punishment for sin. Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon (1648–1717) preached escape from the corporal purgatory-prison through spiritual quietude. More recently, Franz von Baader, whose theosophy Roksandra Sturdza brought to the Russian court in the 1810s, posited the Fall as a historic rather than a speculative truth, explaining that sin had destroyed the natural harmony of humanity and nature.

Similarly, in *Les soirées* original sin explains the state of the temporal world. The first dialogue already reflects on evil’s worldly consequences, asserting the unhappiness of criminals with Plutarch. But the second dialogue explores the subject theoretically, introducing reflections on the consequences of the Fall more Augustinian than Madame Guyon’s, and Platonic in a different sense. Pondering the variety of foods and diseases in the world, the senator comments that “there is no [such thing as] chance in the world,” and that “the communication of foods and drinks among men is related . . . to some secret work that is being operated in the world without our knowledge,” and that affects both the physical and moral realms. Agreeing, the count proposes that “the realm of physical evil can be . . . indefinitely diminished by [the] supernatural means [of prayer].” The ensuing discussion seeks to establish this claim on grounds that the commission of original sin has corresponding effects in the moral and physical worlds: “There is,” says the count, “between an *infirm* man and a *sick* man the same difference that

10. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 141.

11. Rebotton, introduction to Maistre, *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, 24.

there is between a *vicious* man and a *guilty* man.”¹² By inference, if moral corruption and physical disease may be cured by the same means, they might share the same cause.

This cause is original sin, whose violent results are permanently recorded in a damaged human structure subject to physical evils and altered in its intellect. The count explains:

All intelligence is by its very nature the result, at once ternary and unique, of a *perception* that apprehends, of a *reason* that affirms, and of a *will* that acts. The first two powers are only *weakened* in man; but the third is *broken*. . . . It is in this third power that man feels himself mortally wounded. He does not know what he wants; he wants what he does not want; he does not want what he wants; he *would want to want* [*il voudrait vouloir*].¹³ He sees something in him that is not him and that is stronger than him.¹⁴

The broken will results in an intellectual indecision and physical passivity symbolized by Tasso's snake. Suffering perpetually from the crimes its wrecked will cannot prevent, pulling on a weight it can hardly bear, the serpent drags after itself, proceeding through time in tortuous agony: *E sè dopo sè tira*, “all ashamed of its painful impotence.”¹⁵ Yet the divine flame within it burns feebly still, and so with erratic and unfinished movements, it summons the remains of its courage to make its way back to God.

In associating original sin with passivity, Maistre may be ranked, ironically, among the “panhedonists,” “anthropocentrists,” and “antimystics” that Henri Bremond identified in the writers of Port-Royal—the very Jansenists Maistre decried unceasingly. Formidable enemies of Fénelon's *pur amour*, these men focused on humanity's contributions to spiritual life. They also opposed the quietude of the soul to its activity, neglecting the intense, constant, yet imperceptible movement that in traditional mysticism God conducts at the soul's “fine apex” to determine its spiritual “states.”¹⁶ Displeased though Maistre would have been by the suggestion that his mysticism resembles the Jansenists', his approach to the problem of good and evil draws greatly on their voluntarism. Pascal's theology confirms this.

12. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 485.

13. In the original, the dual meaning of “wanting” and “willing” conveyed by the French *vouloir* enhances the voluntarist overtones of this passage.

14. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 487–88.

15. *Ibid.*, 487.

16. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, 7:133.

Jansenism's foremost apologist wrote only one truly theological treatise, the incomplete and disordered *Écrits sur la grâce* (1655–66). In this work Pascal linked the problem of grace to man's state before and after the Fall, and—spurred by the voluntarist terms in which Luis de Molina (1535–1600) and his fellow Spanish Jesuits had set the debate—understood the difference as a change not in man's body but in his will. Pascal argued that through his sin Adam had passed on to his descendants a will, corrupted by the enormity of his crime, that made them take true pleasure in evil. The same theology of the will, distributed in epigrams, infused the *Pensées*, which Maistre annotated during his two main reading periods at Lausanne and Saint Petersburg—in 1796 and 1798, and again in 1808 and 1809 (this latter reading coinciding with the beginning of *Les soirées*' composition). The only major difference between Maistre's and Pascal's theories of evil was that the former defined moral corruption as an absolute deficiency and penchant to passivity, whereas the latter did so in terms of an active inclination to sin. Pascal's anthropocentrism was far more marked than Maistre's: it pronounced humanity to exist for pleasure, and religion to be desirable for providing greater enjoyment than sin.¹⁷

But *Les soirées* borrowed further from the master of Port-Royal, turning original sin into a total explanation. The *Pensées* reflects that original sin seems to us an “astounding thing,” since it is shocking to our reason that we should have been rendered guilty by the sin of a man so far removed from us in time and circumstance. Simultaneously, however, this most incomprehensible of mysteries is our only true means of self-understanding: it alone throws light on “all the absurdities of human destiny, all the miseries and ‘contradictions’ of the human soul, our corruption and despair, the very weakness of our intellect, our elaborate methods of self-deception, all this mass of woe, deprivation, and sickness.”¹⁸ Experience also teaches us that human existence is not unified and harmonious. Rather, the model of man divided against himself, unceasingly striving beyond himself and ever lapsing beneath himself, is the only one at once explanatory of experience, and consonant with the principle of sufficient reason.¹⁹ In harmony with this, the count of *Les soirées* speaks of original sin as a “mystery without doubt” that yet “explains everything and without which nothing can be explained.”²⁰

17. Ibid., 7:19.

18. Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and the Spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 141.

19. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 142–44.

20. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 484–85.

Where Maistre finally parted ways with Pascal was over the usefulness of original sin as a hypothesis explaining not only life, but the facts of history. In spiritual matters Pascal was not interested in reason, whether empirical or geometrical.²¹ For him, God, hidden from our sight and incomprehensible through experience, can only be known within. Pascal went so far in this fideism as to regard any reasonable thought or action unallied with obedience to the divine law or unborn of the desire to praise God as a service to the devil, a sinful, because distracting, occupation—including the mathematical and natural sciences in whose practice he himself excelled so brilliantly.²² By thus leaving original sin's implications for the world and history unsaid, Pascal, like Augustine before him, rendered history and science irrelevant to salvation and ineligible as aids to theology.

The count of *Les soirées*, by contrast, considers that original sin explains history, since it “repeats itself unfortunately at every instant of duration, though in a secondary manner.”²³ This repetition results in a sort of moral Lamarckianism, or historical mechanism for the inheritance of acquired corruption. The mere acceptance of the Aristotelian notion that “*every being that reproduces can only produce a similar being*”²⁴ makes evident that crime is contracted like a disease: “If a man [says the count] has given himself over to such crimes or to such a sequence of crimes that they are able to alter the moral principle in him, you understand that this degradation is transmissible, as you understand the transmission of the scrofulous or syphilitic vice.”²⁵ Augustinian intellectualism had precluded any argument of this kind. Maistre may be the first Catholic thinker to have claimed that the exercise of a broken will has continual physical effects—certainly in the realm of animal corporality, if the second dialogue's opening argument about disease is any indication; but possibly also in that of glorious corporality. Human duplicity, productive in the *Éclaircissement* of a guilt effaced by sacrifice, now generates physical disease as well. As the count says, “Certain prevarications committed by certain men can have degraded them anew *more or less*, and thus perpetuated more or less in their descendants vices as well as maladies.”²⁶ The space of uncertainty where freedom and the divine had resided since the essays on Rousseau—and that prefig-

21. Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing*, 141.

22. *Ibid.*, 135.

23. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 484.

24. *Ibid.*, 486.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

ures Maistre's turn away from absolutism—reappears here once more, this time in a terrifying account of the progress of sin that renders every single person continuously responsible for the Fall. And, once more, it pushes history forward.

This moral and physical “degradation” realized in time is a variation on a cosmological tale, dating back to the seventeenth century, that narrated the fate of the successive humanities who inhabited the world after Eden—a tale of human misfortune similar to the one Bergier recounted in the *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, and that Maistre alluded to in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*. According to the count, prediluvian humanity, still quasi-angelic yet already sinful, could not stand the immense knowledge and wisdom that God had bestowed on it, and so fell through crimes beyond our capacity to imagine. After the Flood, it was succeeded by contemporary civilized humanity, which, ever prevaricating and ever punished (as at Babel), is at least aware of its own degradation and, exhorted by conscience, yearns for a higher spiritual state. Further prevarications created, with time, other humanities. The bottom of the human ladder is occupied by the conscienceless savage, insensitive to religion, who owes his degradation to postdiluvian prevarications “of a kind that cannot be repeated.”²⁷ A third category is represented by the barbarians, who reside in a spiritual space intermediary between the savages and civilized humanity: degraded though they are, they yet await salvation by religion.

Corresponding to Bergier's division of humanity into keepers of revelation and idolaters, heirs of a truth corrupted by passion, these human classes are meant to provide living testimony against the eighteenth-century belief—propagated by Kant, Hegel, and Herder—that original sin was good because it increased human knowledge. The count rejects expressly the possibility that original sin might lead to knowledge, saying that it not only “[degrades] man,” causing him “to commit every crime,” “to suffer every evil”; but that it also makes him “subject to ignorance.”²⁸ Ultimately, though, the duality original sin produces is complicit in human salvation, since, in wounding man intellectually, it also makes him desire knowledge. In the second dialogue, the Cartesian separation of humans from animals broached in *De l'état de nature* reappears. This time, however, it explains how humans are saved by the “hunger of science, that agitates man” when he becomes conscious of the split state of his species:

27. Ibid., 485.

28. Ibid., 486, 487.

[Man] *gravitates* . . . toward the regions of light. No beaver, no swallow, no bee wants to know more than its predecessors. All beings are calm in the place they occupy. All are degraded but do not know it; man alone has the feeling of it, and that feeling is at once the proof of his grandeur and his misery, of his sublime rights and of his incredible degradation. In the state to which he is reduced, he does not even have the sad happiness of ignoring himself: he must contemplate himself without cease, and he cannot contemplate himself without blushing; his very greatness humiliates him, since the lights that elevate him toward the angels serve only to show him the abominable tendencies within him that degrade him toward the beast. He looks in the depths of his being for some healthy part without being able to find it: evil has soiled everything, *and man entire is nothing but a malady*.²⁹

The idea that man is at once “elevated above all beings” and “degraded below all” resembled Pascal’s vision of man as ever striving beyond himself, and ever lapsing beneath himself, reproducing the Augustinian anthropology of human twoness discussed in the *Éclaircissement*. And it encapsulated the “most profound and difficult problem of eighteenth-century philosophy,” the conundrum that “if the spell of transcendence could not be broken, and if man was and remained ‘self-transcendent,’ then any natural explanation of the world and of existence was checked at the start.”³⁰ As we shall see, however, Maistrian theodicy could use the doctrine of duplicity to account for nature rationally because it resolved the problem of transcendence through temporalization. Maistre’s one aid in this project was Pascal himself, who applied reason to defend the “unconditional surrender to faith” as the only means of truth,³¹ yet who by faith avoided exploring sin’s salvific consequences. Also delusive was the way out of the morass to which Pascal pointed in the *Pensées* when, in a rare moment of concern with the world, he argued that the human will converges with God’s in the determination of mankind’s universal destiny—though the divine will dominates, acting as the “source, principle, and cause” of the first.³²

The divine and human wills could be reconciled with naturalism only if their empire was subordinated to reason; and *Les soirées* does precisely this. In the process, however, it subverts Pascal’s pious assumption of divine domina-

29. Ibid., 487.

30. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 143–44.

31. Ibid., 143.

32. Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing*, 114.

tion. In what is possibly Maistre's most Pelagian moment, the count pictures created spiritual wills engaged in frequent competition with God and able even, on occasion, to annul God's designs. God's will, in fact, is contradicted in *Les soirées* not only by human wills, but by the wills of spirits that are not attached to bodies and, more efficacious than man's, can

unite, grow, or clash with each other of themselves, since they are nothing but actions. It is even possible that a created will annuls, I do not say the *effort*, but the result of a divine action; since, in this sense, God himself tells us that God WANTS things that do not happen, because man DOES NOT WANT [them to happen]. . . . Think of what the will of man can do in the circle of evil; it can contradict God, . . . what can that same will do when it acts with him? Where are the bounds of its power? Its nature is not to have any.³³

By thus integrating Pascalian voluntarism with Neoplatonic cosmology, Maistre contradicts Pascal's theology, lending original sin empirical reality. And by portraying individual wills interacting with God's, he makes it possible to rationalize will's development through time. This implies reversing, in specific individual cases—the very ones that make history—Pascal's doctrine of divine supremacy in conflicts of the will.

Adopting anthropocentrism is one way of fighting the Enlightenment with its own weapons, and *Les soirées'* anthropocentrism is remarkable, even for a Jesuitist. Maistre presents religion not as a means of glorifying God, but as an opportunity for human moral enrichment, efficacious discipline, and the ascent toward sainthood. He knows that, in the world created by Revolution, religion must now inexorably produce social and historical progress if it is to survive. Indeed, if anything can link Maistre to the radical Enlightenment, it is *Les soirées'* vindication of illimitable human power, its tacit assumption that spiritual activity is more a matter of human progress than of God's praise. It was a vision bordering on heterodoxy. Maistre was probably aware of this, and he may have placed his thoughts in the mouths of fictional interlocutors partly for that reason.

Francis de Sales, whom Maistre reread while redacting *Les soirées*, and who can be read as a radical anthropocentrist,³⁴ probably helped set the tone of the dialogues. In his thesis, *Saint François de Sales, directeur d'âmes* (1923), the abbé Vincent argued that Francis "IDENTIFIED . . . CHRISTIANITY . . . WITH

33. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 591–92.

34. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, 7:27–36.

MORAL PROGRESS”; that he was concerned primarily to “HONOR GOD FIRSTLY THROUGH THE CULTIVATION OF ONESELF, SECONDLY THROUGH THE CULTIVATION OF OTHERS”;³⁵ and that to him sin was heinous not because it offends God, as the theocentrists would have it, but because it debases us and separates us from God.³⁶ Henri Bremond points out that Vincent’s reading is tendentious for neglecting Francis’s insistence on God’s presence at the apex of our souls, as well as for his idea that God is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. Vincent therefore fails to realize that “while the practice of moral virtues . . . helps us to merit the divine encounter and prepares us for it, it brings us first to the surface of our being, distracts us, from our deep soul and from God.” In looking for the sublime among the human, Francis nonetheless certified the arrival of a spirituality, imbued with Renaissance humanism, whose secularizing descendants eventually contributed to the radical Enlightenment. It was a spirituality increasingly ignorant of the Benedictine soul whence the will moves “out of ourselves and into God.”³⁷ In *Les soirées*, Maistre professed a religiosity consistent with Vincent’s interpretation of Francis. More inclined toward the intellectualism of the esotericists than toward the intuited sublime confessed by Francis, Maistre also overlooked what theocentric elements Salesian spirituality contained. As a result, he used Augustine’s doctrine of original sin to argue that humanity possesses a world-historical agency absent from, and even contrary to, Augustinian theology.

Ironic History

The problem of divine intention had been a major preoccupation of Maistre’s since the incomprehension he had admitted, in the *Considérations sur la France*, that God could have allowed something as “radically evil” as the French Revolution to subsist. That moral purity could be progressive seemed straightforward. As cited above, when the human will obeys God’s, its endowments are infinite; and, as argued in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, it is the love of God that makes human knowledge possible. The obverse proposition—that evil intentions can have commendable results—was thornier, but Maistre answered it early on. Ever since he had been led to “admire order in disorder” when observing revolutionary events in chapter 2 of the *Considérations sur la France*, he had come to believe that evil, selfish human intentions may, when

35. Ibid., 7:29.

36. Ibid., 7:36.

37. Ibid., 7:31.

manipulated by Providence or transformed by natural law, have historical results quite salutary for human destiny. Such intentions, indeed, can hasten spiritual progress and the historical return to God.

God exercises his will in the world by either lending good results to bad motivations or by conferring on human actions performed for particular ends universal ends undiscerned by the historical actors who carry out those actions. The senator gives one example of this latter process when discussing the Bible Society. Although he deems it “one of the most powerful machines that has ever been turned on against Christianity,” it may be destined to play a historical role precisely comparable to that once played by the ancient Egyptian king who ordered the translation of the Bible into Greek, thus aiding, unbeknownst to himself, the first Christian apostles who found their work already done centuries later.³⁸

The idea of a Providential reorientation of human intent was the historicist counterpart of the Jansenist sociology of the passions that flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century.³⁹ With the *Essais de morale* (1671) of Pierre Nicole (1625–95) appeared a descriptive and behaviorist naturalism deeming concupiscence, or preferment of the self to God, as integral to social functioning. In Nicole’s view, vanity, or *amour propre*, is a perfect counterfeit of true charity, introspectively and objectively. Only three effective reins exist on this deceitful attachment, to which it must submit in order to serve itself, and which form the three main bonds of society: fear of death, material interest (or “gross” concupiscence), and the desire to be loved. Restrained by these, *amour propre* can make for itself a life of moderate asceticism, simulating charity’s *odium corporis* and thereby producing a healthy society. Indeed, *amour propre*’s seamless duplicity can perform important spiritual services, as our inability to distinguish between our truly charitable impulses and our selfish ones preserves us from pride, and therefore disobedience to God; for it is far more dangerous for us to know our virtues than our vices.⁴⁰

Nicole’s Providentialist and ironic rehabilitation of the passions was not limited to Port-Royal. It belonged to a wider French Augustinian movement that included the Calvinist Pierre Bayle and the Jansenist sympathizer François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80), and that culminated in *The Fable of*

38. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 769.

39. On Rousseau’s attitude to Augustinian sociology, see Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, 426–31.

40. Dale Van Kley, “Pierre Nicole, Jansenism, and the Morality of Enlightened Self-Interest,” in *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France and Germany*, ed. Alan Kors and Paul J. Korshim (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 69–85.

the Bees: *Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714) of the former Jansenist Bernard de Mandeville (1670–1733). Cartesians and voluntarists, these writers all assumed that the passions are the essential determinants of human nature, and that the universe is governed not by being, as the Scholastics and Aristotelians would have it, but by wills both Providential and human. The Augustinians likewise believed, with Descartes, that the mind uses the passions, so that hypocrisy governs human relations almost invariably. Pascal had perhaps been the first modern Augustinian to voice, in the *Pensées*, the antithetical results of intent in the private and public realms when he speculated, picking up Augustine's cues in *The City of God*, that a legislator can make good use of humanity's evil instincts, not repressing them by force, but using them in the public interest.⁴¹

Maistre explicitly rejected the Augustinian sociology of *amour propre* as a political possibility in the *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III*, where he condemned philosophical attempts to destroy religion:

The love of glory can, without doubt, produce momentary effects of virtue; but I doubt that an essentially equitable administrative plan exists that is not based on respect for the Supreme Being. Honor will lead the monarch to combat; honor will make him cultivate all the brilliant qualities made to captivate the admiration of men: but the obscure virtues that are exercised only in silence and that are nevertheless the most useful—where will he find them? What will teach him to be sober, prudent, thrifty, laborious? When voluptuousness stretches out its arms to him with a smile, show me the strength that will keep him in his solitary cabinet, to discuss, with his ministers, a thorny administrative question.⁴²

Vice can emulate virtue, but not lastingly as Nicole pretended: sin's weakening of the will ensures that the mask falls sooner or later. With the Revolution, this belief was temporalized and acquired a historical dimension, as Maistre became convinced that vice could accomplish the good briefly during times of devastation.⁴³ On the subject of intent Maistre maintained, with Pascal and Nicole, that divine design is often at odds with human intentions, and that spiritual benefit results from humanity's (sin-produced) ignorance of this duplicity. The fundamental difference between Maistre and Nicole lay

41. Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing*, 233.

42. Maistre, *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III*, 23.

43. OC, 10:470.

in the fact that, for Maistre, the relationship between divine Providence and human ignorance was historical. Nicole operated in a world of self-sufficient passions where beneficial ignorance saved only individuals. *Les soirées* and the *Considérations*, by contrast, portray a world where the Providential will directs historical activity, and where the vicissitudes of ignorant intent under divine guidance—the spiritual services that the unrighteous or simply spiritually unenlightened render unwittingly to God and society—further the spiritual salvation of whole nations and civilizations by history.

Primeval Knowledge and the True World System

For Maistre, sin in succession is a vicious cycle. Once humanity sins, it slides down the slope of ignorance and into a state where it remembers less of divine revelation than before. The forgetfulness of knowledge of universals that invariably results from time adds to this effect; so that, ever more ignorant of God's law, humanity is ever more prone to sin again and fall further. This process may be alleviated by humanity's spiritual efforts to return to God, or by God's bestowal of divine revelation, as happened when Christ came down to earth. The process may also, however, be aggravated by divine intervention. To punish humanity for its excesses and prevent it from using revelation for evil ends, God may ordain catastrophes during which knowledge of the divine is not merely forgotten gradually with time or discretely through the commission of sin, but almost completely eradicated from the earth.

It had been presumed by religious writers at least since the *Telluris theoria sacra* (1681) of Thomas Burnet (1635–1715) that the most momentous event of this kind was the Flood. Dividing a fabulous, silent, primordial paradise from the ruined nature of the present, the Flood represented the just passage to an earth newly endowed with history and remindful, in its jagged and uneven physical appearance, of the sins of humankind.⁴⁴ In *Les soirées*, too, the Flood represents an irreversible physical degradation, although here sin is recorded in the structure of humans rather than the earth. The postdiluvian period saw the rise of an ignorant and historicized humanity virtually unrelated to its timeless prediluvian ancestors. The antediluvians were quasi-angelic beings endowed with great knowledge and power—"marvelous men" undeserving to be called human whom "beings of a superior order deigned to favor . . . with the most precious communications"⁴⁵—. But this power once misused, the science that sustained it disappeared:

44. Rossi, *Dark Abyss of Time*, 15–16, 33–39.

45. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 491.

Men began with science, but with a science different from ours and superior to ours, because it began from higher up, which even made it very dangerous; and this explains . . . why science in its beginnings was always mysterious and locked up in the temples, where she finally died, when its flame could serve only to burn.⁴⁶

With the loss of divine knowledge came greater dependence on God. “The first men who repopulated the world after the great catastrophe,” says the count, “had need of extraordinary succour to vanquish the difficulties of all kinds that were opposed to them.” Indeed, even God’s intervention repaired the Flood’s damages only imperfectly, and was insufficient to arrest the pace of forgetfulness. As secondary original sin proceeded in the postdiluvian age, history became a succession of epistemological failures, divided into those times “when men saw effects in causes, . . . when they raise themselves painfully from effects to causes, when they only concern themselves with effects, when they say it is useless to occupy themselves with causes, when they do not even know what is a cause.”⁴⁷ Later, when divine knowledge of causes—or knowledge of universals—disappeared, there emerged the modern science of particulars. This is the science studied in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, whose progress through conjecture discloses knowledge of universals.

European Christendom was the privileged parent of this new, human knowledge. In medieval Europe, all the “faculties . . . organized themselves around [theology] like maids of honor around their queen.”⁴⁸ Yet despite their origin, these sciences betray their human character by the effort, reminiscent of Tasso’s snake, with which they labor:

In the tight vestments of the North, its head lost in the volutes of a mass of lying hair, its arms laden with books and instruments of all kinds, pale from vigils and work, [modern science] drags herself stained with ink and breathless on the road of truth, lowering toward the earth its forehead scribbled with algebra. Nothing similar in high antiquity. As much as it is possible to see the science of primitive times at such enormous distance, one sees her always free and isolated, flying more than walking, and suggesting in all her person something ethereal and supernatural. She frees to the winds her hair, which escapes from an

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 490. Saint-Martin too had encouraged knowledge of causes (see chapter 2).

48. Ibid., 586.

Oriental *mitre*; the *ephod*⁴⁹ covers her breast raised with inspiration; she looks but at the sky; and her disdainful foot seems to touch the earth only to leave it. Yet, although she has never asked anything of anyone and although she is known to have no human support, it is not less proven that she has possessed the most rare knowledge.⁵⁰

Fragments of this “most rare knowledge” were introduced into Europe throughout the eighteenth century by the Oriental and Indic Renaissances and were soon deemed essential to historical knowledge. As Herder explained in the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*—published in 1784, the same year that the Asiatick Society of Calcutta formed⁵¹—Sanskrit texts were prerequisites to the philosophy of history. Maistre disliked Herder intensely,⁵² but he, too, thought of Orientalism as the key to the future, hoping mystically that the “most rare knowledge” known to antiquity and the Orient would shortly succeed in reestablishing the rule of spirit.⁵³

In being prediluvian, Maistre’s “most rare knowledge” resembled the *mathesis universalis*, or science of order and measurement, that Descartes’ studies of light made famous, and that Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) called, in his *Psychologia rationalis* (1743), the “science of sciences” or the “universal science, [containing] within itself all other sciences,”⁵⁴ and describing the functional relations between the elements of Creation. *Mathesis* was Swedenborg’s rendition of the primitive, all-knowing Adamic language that, according to Leibniz, German preserved most faithfully.

Maistre left no records of reading Swedenborg—although according to Robert Darnton he spent some of his evenings in Saint Petersburg assimilating the ideas of the Swedish mystic.⁵⁵ It is probable that some of Maistre’s conversations with his Swedish friend Kurt de Stedingk (believed to have

49. “The figurative images of Yahweh were called *ephod*, like the robes of the Levites, . . . surplices drawn with a belt, which the officiants wore during their service.” From Ernest Renan, *Histoire du peuple d’Israël* (1887), cited by Jean-Louis Darcel in *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1993), 1:179n.

50. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 493.

51. Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-King (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 13.

52. See Robert Triomphe, “Joseph de Maistre et Herder,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 7–9 (1954): 322–29.

53. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 765.

54. See Erik Sandström, “The Doctrine of Correspondences: Both Science and Philosophy,” *New Philosophy* 73 (1970): 379–93.

55. Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 139. No reference to a primary source is provided.

inspired the character of the senator in *Les soirées*) involved Swedenborg—especially given Stedingk’s considerable influence in the Swedish RER.⁵⁶ As a young Freemason, Maistre was also fascinated by the primitive knowledge that Swedenborg’s heirs, the Mesmerists and the Willermozian Martinists, proclaimed was contained in their mysticism. But fascination did not prevent Maistre from rejecting the historicity of Willermoz’s claim that the RER was the repository of divine revelation. Moreover, Swedenborg’s aspiration to rational, a priori knowledge would have displeased him—as would, for that matter, any scientific system devised by an individual and untested by time. Finally, *mathesis* did not privilege astronomy, which Maistre—here prefiguring Auguste Comte—exalted as the mother of all the sciences for studying God’s abode.

Maistre in fact preferred to see in the Copernican “true world system” modern science’s closest approximation of the “most rare knowledge” of antiquity. One might wonder why he did not choose other, more recent “world systems” to admire, like the mechanistic description of the heavenly laws that Pierre-Simon de Laplace (1749–1827), following D’Alembert and Condorcet, had proposed in the *Exposition du système du monde* (1796); or, more generally, the moral and spiritual order of the universe that the Savoyard vicar had called the “*système du monde*.” But Maistre consistently recommended Copernican astronomy because it was the oldest modern world system that was still scientifically respected; because it was unrelated to the critical spirit of the eighteenth century; because, as Copernicus himself intimated, it was “perfectly known in the highest antiquity”; and because it was of Pythagorean inspiration. He cherished it, in short, because it bore every mark of being reconstructive and intuitionist and thus of involving the creative movement of the soul up to God rather than the destructive antics of individual reason. Copernicus’s knowledge seemed to Maistre of that synthetic, nondiscursive kind that is “given” and “bought” with spiritual love—as happened when the antediluvians received God’s revelation—and acquired with the same suddenness as it is lost through sin—as happened when they sinned and the Flood ensued. Says the count:

People do not cease to repeat: *Think of the time that was necessary to know this or that thing!* What inconceivable blindness! Only an instant was necessary. If man could know the cause of a single physical phenomenon, he would probably understand all the others. We do not want to

56. Rebotton, *Études maistriennes*, 168.

see that the truths most difficult to discover are very easy to understand. The solution of the problem of the *crown* once made tremble with joy the most profound geometer of antiquity; but this very solution is found in all elementary mathematics courses, and does not surpass the ordinary strength of an intelligence of fifteen years. Plato, speaking . . . of what is most important for man to know, adds immediately with that penetrating simplicity natural to him: *These things are learned easily and perfectly*, IF SOMEONE TEACHES THEM TO US.⁵⁷

But, Plato goes on, “*no one will teach it to us, unless God shows him the way.*”⁵⁸ The need for God’s intervention never wavers. The difference in the postdiluvian world is that the science that helps man return to God must now be earned, and that in the process of human learning to which both God and humanity contribute, it is humanity who must henceforth take the initiative.

The Ages of the Universe

Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier’s *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion* tells of “three epochs”: one in which God disclosed a “*domestic religion*,” comprising a few dogmas, to the first patriarchs; another when, this revelation having been corrupted by passion, God gave the Hebrews a “*natural religion*” whereby “the ancient cult was conserved, but . . . rendered . . . more widespread and more pompous”;⁵⁹ and a third, Christian epoch when men, being “less vulgar and less stupid than in the preceding centuries,” God revealed himself not through “prodigies of terror, but through traits of goodness.”⁶⁰ Optimistically, Bergier depicts a single humanity whose faults are continuously corrected, and whose nature is ever improved, by divine revelation. Given especially Maistre’s epistemological debt to Bergier, the contrast with *Les soirées*’ story of a revelation lost through sin and dispersed among multiple humanities is striking. One explanation for the divergence is that Bergier had no Augustinian ideas about an irremediably corrupted world from which God had departed. Although Bergier conceded that revelation is forgotten through time, God was continuously involved in educating and improving humankind, so the course of history was not primarily explicable by the commission of original sin across duration.

57. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 490.

58. *Ibid.*, 490n.

59. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, 1:7.

60. *Ibid.*, 1:9.

Maistre's notion of God's contribution to the education of humanity across time was very different and owed much to the idea of the primitive revelation introduced by Herder's pupil and the professor of Sanskrit at Bonn, Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829). Maistre does not seem to have read him; but Schlegel's ideas were central to the epistolary conversation that he and Uvarov held on ancient and Oriental knowledge during 1811–14. Uvarov was very influenced by Schlegel. He had met him in Vienna through Madame de Staël and had a literary quarrel with him. Uvarov detested Schlegel's Romanticism; but he was very taken with his *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808),⁶¹ the book that invented the Oriental Renaissance⁶² and established the doctrine of the primitive revelation in one stroke. Displaying a concern with religious facts that was original at the time, Schlegel taught that, in the beginning, humans had lived in perfect communion with God; but that the harmony was betrayed, resulting in a forgetfulness that had caused a slide down the slope of ignorance reminiscent of the one Maistre evoked in *Les soirées*. Schlegel's major innovation lay in the claim that the harmony between God and humans could be rebuilt by studying the Indic knowledge that had preserved it most purely. This narrative pervades implicitly the two works that Uvarov sent Maistre—the *Projet d'une académie asiatique* and the *Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis*. It also informed Uvarov's and Maistre's correspondence.⁶³

It was through Uvarov that Maistre came across the works of Sir William Jones (1746–94), founder of modern linguistics, discoverer of Indo-European, and cofounder of the Asiatick Society of Calcutta,⁶⁴ whose findings offered the hope of reconstructing the primitive revelation in detail. Maistre borrowed Uvarov's volumes of Jones and noted them down scrupulously, continuing with them the private Oriental renaissance he had begun in Cagliari. “Oriental Jones” also figures prominently in *Les soirées*: the count reads aloud from his translation of *The Laws of Manu* (1794) in the first dialogue,⁶⁵ and Jones is mentioned approvingly through the rest of the work.⁶⁶ Using Jones,

61. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786–1855* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 17.

62. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 72.

63. On the Maistre–Uvarov correspondence, see Armenteros, “Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge,” in *Joseph de Maistre and His European Readers: From Friedrich von Gentz to Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Armenteros and Lebrun, 203–38 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

64. Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

65. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 468–69.

66. *Ibid.*, 519, 520, 682, 768, and 768n.

in fact, Maistre hoped to help reconstruct the primitive revelation on the basis of Oriental lore as Schlegel suggested.

Unlike Schlegel, however, Maistre believed that the task of reconstruction had already begun. True to his traditionalist penchant in matters of knowledge, and to his habit of rescuing the losers of intellectual history from oblivion, *Les soirées* parades not contemporary Orientalism but the ill-known *New System; or, An Analysis of Ancient Mythography* (1774) of Jacob Bryant (1715–1804). A distant offspring of Cambridge Platonism,⁶⁷ the *New System* purported, as its subtitle stated, “to divest Tradition of Fable, and to reduce truth to its original Purity.” The book’s content suggests that the “Fable” in question was the work of eighteenth-century scholars like Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), Nicolas Fréret (1688–1749), and Charles de Brosses (1709–77), who had argued against the derivation of all primitive world history from the Bible. As for the “Truth,” it was the history of the biblical “first ages” of humanity, which Bryant undertook to elucidate with seventeenth-century linguistic methods, fabricating a single genealogy for all men and women originating in the biblical act of Creation. Like his early modern predecessors, Bryant began with the Flood as the epochal event and told humanity’s ensuing history as the progressive misremembrance of revelation. The forgetful protagonists of his story were the descendants of Ham and especially the Cuthites or Amonians, the single diasporic Gentile family who had founded the pagan cities and instituted gods, heroes, and demons.

The success the *New System* enjoyed in the 1770s was due, paradoxically, to how very outdated it was. The methods Bryant employed—including etymologizing and collating Scholastic texts—were hopelessly obsolete, and worthier of seventeenth-century mythologists and polymaths like Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), and John Marsham (1602–85) than of a mythographer of the age of Enlightenment. But the book came out at a time when many religious minds, weary of the triumphs of skepticism, deism, and *philosophie*, and mistrustful of the new, extrabiblical chronologies they had produced, could welcome it sympathetically. For Maistre, the *New System* provided a solution to the problem of chronology, the science that threatened the Bible’s scientific legitimacy and demanded the reconciliation of science and religion. As he wrote to Potocki in 1810: “Chronology is not at all an isolated science: it must be in agreement with

67. On Maistre and the Cambridge Platonists, see Philippe Barthelet, “The Cambridge Platonists Mirrored by Joseph de Maistre,” in Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 67–77.

metaphysics, with theology, with physics, with the philosophy of history.”⁶⁸ In the *New System* Maistre found all the fundamentals of his history of knowledge: the idea that knowledge is spiritual and revealed; that human history is marked by its vicissitudes; and that it is the nature of revelation to be forgotten with time and preserved, in corrupted form, in the myths and institutions of pagan peoples.

These remarkable convergences were explicable by the fact that Maistre’s and Bryant’s mythography and chronology had formed by the same melding of Augustinianism and Platonism that Huet first enabled, and that attained its most systematic formulation in the work of the Cambridge Platonists. Ralph Cudworth’s hylozoism, the belief that nature is the repository of a “plastic energy”⁶⁹—an unconscious, incorporeal substance and instrument of divine change that ensures the order of the whole universe—was essentially and quite problematically a Platonist alternative, formulated on Cartesian grounds, to the Cartesian world empty of spirit. Because he never explained how his plastic energy produced natural events and related to the divine mind in terms other than dogmatic,⁷⁰ Cudworth left the world under the government of a principle for whose functioning no divine will was necessary. He hence exposed his own philosophy to the very atheism he accused Descartes’ system of encouraging. Dualist transcendentalism and Huet’s immanentism remained immiscible in the work of the Cambridge Platonists, linked, solely and tenuously, by a Puritan faith in the Word, and especially the written Word, as God’s most perfect self-manifestation to humanity. The contradiction arose from combining Plato with Calvinist remnants, from the need to restore God to the world without ever declaring nature to be divine. Not coincidentally, Calvinism was the religious background of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Platonists like Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736), Pierre Bayle, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), who abandoned the doctrine of predestination for an idealism heavily invested with moral values. Emerging from this Calvinist background, the anachronisms of Bryant’s mythography become understandable. The account of a primeval revelation progressively misremembered and fragmented through successive catastrophes evoked the Augustinians’ postlapsarian world whence God was absent, while explaining the existence of Gentile peoples within a rigorist biblicist framework.

68. OC, 8:102.

69. John Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy: Studies in the History of Idealism in England and America*, 3rd ed. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992), 36.

70. Ibid., 39.

Maistre agrees with Bergier that revelation was anciently forgotten. But he suggests, with a Pelagian twist, that oblivion turns humans into history's primary agents. For him, history emerges from two related human phenomena: the misremembrance caused by the weakened will, and the modern scientific process that results from this very will's desire to recapture knowledge. Maistrian humanity is astoundingly empowered, especially when considering that it is broken by sin. This impression intensifies when comparing *Les soirées* with Bergier's *Traité*. Cheerfully positing sacred history as punctuated by revelation, Bergier leaves the fate of a steadily improved human family, split into sacred and profane peoples, almost entirely in God's hands. *Les soirées'* theory of original sin, in contrast, proclaims a human race both autonomous and united. Since the Fall, the world's peoples, whether Gentile or chosen by God, are in charge of the future, and bound together in weakness.

Will and Speech in the Universe

Maistre's universe is populated by various classes of souls, hierarchically arranged and closely associated, that communicate with each other, and whose wills ordain universal development. Yet where the *Éclaircissement* examines the will-as-action, *Les soirées* concentrates on the will-as-Word, as exercised among and between classes of spiritual beings. This focus distinguishes *Les soirées* from the theodicies that inspired it. Each of Leibniz's monads had mirrored and represented the world by degrees according to its level of consciousness, contributing its movements to those of a universe "essentially and infinitely self-differentiating and progressive."⁷¹ Yet insofar as monadic apprehension was strictly individual and verbally uncontested, it remained purely rational. In this regard, the *Monadologie* remains the eighteenth century's major attempt at explaining the world with pure reason. For while Leibniz cited Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* "in enthusiastic recognition,"⁷² he carefully eschewed the fascination with the Word that it contained, along with any possibility of voluntarism. In *Les soirées*, a Leibnizian humanity likewise "contemplates the universe from a multiplicity of perspectives," and grasps the meaning of the events taking place in the world's "grand and magnificent spectacle." But Maistrian contemplation

71. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 283.

72. Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. James P. Pettegrove, 2nd ed. (New York: Gordian, 1970), 150–51.

also involves self-transcendence, or “[coming] out of oneself and [rising] high enough to see the world instead of only seeing one point.”⁷³ Individual and universal thus sometimes fuse in the act of contemplation, and sometimes remain distinct, generating the duality that is necessary for the production of history. It was this very duality that Leibniz, striving to explain nature on strictly rational grounds, had wished to avoid, collapsing the all onto the concrete within the monads and against Descartes. Concomitantly, *Les soirées* posits not only individual beings, like Leibniz, but also groups of beings. It persists in separating humanity from animality as *De l'état de nature* had done before by pronouncing, with Descartes, that knowledge of universals is a human preserve. Says the count:

Intelligence alone raises itself to the universal. Your eyes perceive a triangle; but that apprehension that you have in common with animals only constitutes you yourself as a simple animal; and you will be *man* or intelligence only in raising yourself from *triangle* to *triangularity*. It is that power to generalize that *specializes* man and that makes him what he is.⁷⁴

If Maistre, then, adheres with Leibniz to the anti-Cartesian doctrine of the plurality of minds, his introduction of the idea of classes of beings is quite foreign to the *Monadologie*. This difference in structure has consequences for the relative role that will and reason play in the universe. In Leibniz's, saturated with monads differentiated solely on an individual basis, universal development is the sum of the movement of the souls who commune with the whole, rationally and one by one. In *Les soirées*, individual souls also move the world with reason. But the classes of beings also communicate with each other. That is, they exercise a spiritual will that is both individual *and* collective, and that moves the prayer and the prophecy with which they govern the world.

Prayer and Desire

We have seen that prayer, in *Les soirées*, is largely anthropocentric, a spiritual activity, apprehensible by human reason, whereby the human will can contradict God's. Even more, prayer is an extraordinary “law of the world” whose measurable effects exhibit a form of reason contrary to the *Encyclopédie*'s absolute, systematic variety:

73. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 515.

74. Ibid., 511.

You tell us, Monsieur le Chevalier, of a certain quantity of water precisely due to each country during the course of a year. . . . To make it easy for [the philosophes], I allow that, each year, the same quantity of water must fall in each country: it will be the invariable law; but the distribution of this water will be . . . the flexible part of the law. You will therefore see that with your invariable laws we will still . . . have floods and droughts, general rains for the world, and rains of exception for those who have known how to ask for them. We will therefore not pray for the olive tree to grow in Siberia, and the *klukwa* in Provence; but we will pray for the olive tree not to freeze in the fields of Aix . . . and for the *klukwa* not to be too hot during your quick summer.⁷⁵

Prayer is not only efficacious, but can actually change the course of history:

When we ask God for victory, we do not ask him to breach the general laws of the universe; that would be too extravagant, but these laws combine in a thousand ways, and allow themselves to be vanquished to a point that it is impossible to assign. . . . An army of 40,000 men is physically inferior to an army of 60,000; but if the first has more courage, experience, and discipline, it will be able to beat the second since it has more action with less mass.⁷⁶

The moral “forces” that were responsible, in *De la souveraineté*, for the parabolic rise and fall of nations, reappear here exerted by groups of “praying” or self-transcending souls.

Like Maistre’s previous works, *Les soirées* attributes collective moral phenomena to the movements of the individual soul, here perceived in the context of a theology of prayer that echoes debates of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Contrary to the claims of Fénelon, Nicole, and Madame Guyon, says the count, prayer is not desire, though ideally it should be so. For it is only very rarely possible to desire to desire—an idea that reiterates Rousseau’s insistence that the heart cannot be commanded. Prayer is what Francis de Sales described it as being, a movement of “the superior part of the soul” that annihilates the individual will into God’s.⁷⁷ Prayer is hence more common and efficacious than the Jansenists or quietists claimed, since the “will to love,” or the will to will love even when one desires to do evil, is attainable by common humans deprived of a “celestial heart” like Fénelon’s.

75. Ibid., 563.

76. Ibid., 663.

77. Ibid., 641n.

“Man,” indeed, “can pray without desire and even against desire.”⁷⁸ The point is crucial. The subject of prayerful desire had been central to the controversy between panhedonists and theocentrists, anthropocentrists and advocates of *pur amour*, at least since the letters of Francis. For anthropocentrists like the Jansenists and asceticists, prayer was panhedonistic and antimystical. It was a means rather than an end because its primary purpose was to help human spiritual advance. And it was desire because the human will controlled it almost completely. As for its goal, it was not to unite the soul with God, but to deploy it to its full potential.

Theocentrism, on the other hand, assumed that religion’s purpose, and the highest end of human existence, is to contemplate God. The theocentrists (like Bérulle) were mystics. For them, humanity’s essence is a two-part soul—*animus* and *anima*—one alive on the surface, ever present, ever felt, the part of the soul that engages with the everyday and is “distracted”; the other, deeper, contemplative, mostly silent—God’s temple. It is this part of the soul that acts in prayer, and it is God who moves it, though we may not know it. That is why the theocentrists think that one can pray without desire. Even in desire, though, theocentric prayer is ultimately realized in the death of the will in God.

Les soirées’ depiction of prayer is consistent with Maistre’s radically anthropocentric interpretation of Salesian spirituality. While he picked up from Francis the mystical belief in the “superior part of the soul,” he seems to have been unaware of its identity as God’s seat and the will’s tomb, portraying it instead as the site of volition’s strengthening. Excepting the crucial theocentric belief that one can pray “without desire and even against desire,” Maistre’s theory of prayer is entirely anthropocentric. In the same way that in the *Éclaircissement* humanity’s return to God through violence is only achieved willfully, in *Les soirées* prayer’s movement toward God becomes a quotidian event of incessant consequence, potentially occurring during the least movements of the spirit (in the same way that original sin occurs through the least impulse of the soul). Like Bremond’s “antimystics,” Maistre opposed the soul’s movement to its rest. The subtler mysticism of the French Catholic tradition, whereby God moves the soul continually between different and often imperceptible spiritual “states,” was hence alien to him. A lack of familiarity with traditional mysticism is partly responsible for this. But probably even more influential were the antimystical challenges to Christianity posed by revo-

78. Ibid., 604.

lutionary religion, especially the cult of Theophilanthropy, instituted during 1796–1801.

Admirers of Voltaire, César Chesneau Dumarsais (1676–1756), Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709–85), and Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–71), the Theophilanthropists dreamed, like Rousseau, of a simple religion based on justice, reason, and social utility. They devised a cult rejecting all notions of a special Providence, or of the idea that the divine will can safeguard the interests of particular individuals or groups. The Theophilanthropist hence “does not adore God out of fear or interest; his prayer is not a solicitation or an excuse. It consists simply in recognizing natural laws, the work of God, of becoming convinced that everything that happens is necessary, that nothing is in vain, that everything has a cause and that the chain of causes is of an eternal order. The prayer of the Theophilanthropist, is in reality the intuition, through conscience, of that order eternal and divine.”⁷⁹

Once prayer no longer comprises God’s praise or humanity’s requests for special favors from God, it loses meaning as a form of communication between humanity and God. In keeping with this way of thinking, Rousseau’s Saint-Preux points out to Julie the uselessness of prayer—much to her disapproval in letter 6 of part 6 of *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Kant, however, follows Saint-Preux on this point in *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793), observing that prayer is immoral or at least unnecessary because it presumes the will to act “upon God,” rather than the desire to simply “become a man agreeable to God.” Jesus Christ himself had indicated the superfluity of prayer, expressing the “spirit of prayer” with the phrase: “May thy will be done!”⁸⁰

The Theophilanthropists, however, did not wish to do away with prayer. They aimed, instead, to transform it into social and political activity. François-Nicolas Benoist-Lamothe (b. 1755), their leader, believed that “civic actions, good works, are the best prayers.”⁸¹ Theophilanthropic virtue was a form of self-extension—the desire to embrace the all⁸²—realized by the general will. It was, of course, a virtue styled on Rousseau, who had strengthened and then annihilated the individual will with desire, depositing its remains in society. Henceforth, Christians faced the challenge of explaining religion’s

79. Albert Mathiez, *La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire, 1796–1801: Essai sur l’histoire religieuse de la révolution*. First published 1903 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1975), 94.

80. Immanuel Kant, “Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft,” *Kants Werke* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1968), 6:195n.

81. Mathiez, *La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire*, 62.

82. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, 432.

contributions to society—all the while denying to society the divinity and absolute moral qualities it possessed in Rousseau's philosophy.

Maistre rose to the challenge in two ways. First, he saved individual integrity by interpreting Francis de Sales to mean that prayer is a movement of the spiritual will. Active and self-destructive, Francis's will has possibly more in common with Pascal's will inclined to evil than with Maistre's passive and wounded will. Yet Francis's will perfects itself not by disappearing into God but by prevailing over individual impulses contrary to God's. Consistent with Maistrian politics, the Salesian theory of prayer counters Rousseau's morality of self-dissolution by self-extension with one of self-restraint that conserves individual integrity and avoids absolutism.

Second, Maistrian prayer counters Rousseauian absolutism with special Providence, a concept implicit in the very notion of supplication. Prayer, in *Les soirées*, can determine the outcome of wars. Praying bodies constitute themselves spontaneously, representing not humanity writ large, but specific people with a historical purpose—like armies. The collective activity of these groups deploys the singular and silently developing constitutions that Maistre first opposed to the Revolution's deliberated and discursive constitutions. To my knowledge, no Catholic thinker had made prayer so rational before, all the while maintaining that—since prayer is not desire—God is ultimately in control.

Prophecy and the End of the World

Special Providence governs not only prayer but also prophecy, the “extraordinary law of the world” that reveals the relationship between time, particular reason, and universal development. Entrance into the future, according to the senator, is a human prerogative that is not humanly controlled. “Man is subject to time, and yet he is by nature a stranger to time.” Periodically, the “divinatory power,”⁸³ “an inner movement” “natural to man [that] will not cease to agitate itself in the world,”⁸⁴ causes some people to leave time and “penetrate the future.” The prophet sees past and future events fusing together and seeming to take place all at once. This is the state of “great confusion” that the Savior himself entered when, “delivered voluntarily to the prophetic spirit, the analogous ideas of the great disasters, separated from time, led him to mix up the destruction of Jerusalem with that of the world.”⁸⁵

83. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 763.

84. *Ibid.*, 764.

85. *Ibid.*, 763.

Among humans, prophecy is the privilege—and the disease—of the exceptionally endowed. But it is an ordinary gift among spirits, who, according to Plato's *Laws*, are “full of wisdom, intelligence, and memory, [know] all our thoughts,” act as “causes of interpretation,” and communicate with us either through “dreams, voices [and] oracles or [by] presenting themselves to us when we leave this life.”⁸⁶ Maistre picked up this belief in portending spirits from Machiavelli, who believed that spirits take pity on us humans, warning us of our future by portending coming misfortunes and adding their contributions to our natural prophecy. In this way, they ensure that all great events that happen in the world are predicted in one way or another.⁸⁷ The catch is that, although we know by this means about all future events, our naturally limited capacity for knowledge prevents us from weaving them together into a coherent narrative. The complete story can only be in God's mind.

Prophecy is special because it happens to extraordinary people; because—unlike prayer—it is unwilling (excepting Christ and possibly the spirits); and because its content, obscure and dwelling mostly on destruction, is alien to absolute reason. Indeed Maistrian prophecy resembles historiography. Both are exercises on remainders, accounts of events as departures from the unexceptional quotidian. Both can proceed from the right interpretation of texts—including the “text” of nature. The prophet of *Les soirées* also resembles the legislator of *De la souveraineté* in that he is a genial, intuitive *exalté* who possesses a right presentiment of the future course of time, based on right understanding of the present times. The senator himself appears in this guise when describing the imminent change in the relationship between science and religion. “The universe,” he says, “is waiting.” A new age is announced “in the sciences: consider well the advance of chemistry, of astronomy even, and you will see where they are leading us. . . . Newton is taking us back to Pythagoras, and at any moment it will be demonstrated that celestial bodies are moved precisely like the human body, by intelligences that are united to them.”⁸⁸ A “third explosion of all-powerful goodness in favor of humanity”⁸⁹ will be heralded when “the natural affinity of religion and science will unite them in the head of a single man of genius,” perhaps already born, who will put an end to “the eighteenth century that still endures.”⁹⁰ Then “all of science will change its appearance: the spirit, long

86. Maistre, *Extraits G*, in *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J16, 29.

87. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 778–79n.

88. *Ibid.*, 765.

89. *Ibid.*, 767.

90. *Ibid.*, 765.

dethroned and forgotten, will return to its place,” and the dawning empire of intuition will be marked by the recognition of antique truths.⁹¹

Les soirées puts forward the (“grain”-like) idea of number as another aid to prophecy, and as the link between human and divine intelligence. “Intelligence,” says the count, “proves itself to intelligence only through the number,”⁹² that noumenal barrier between humans and animals. Three is the most significant of all numbers. It is the number of the Trinity, written everywhere in nature, in the stars and on the earth, in human intelligence and on the human body, in sacred books and in the rites of world religions.⁹³ Its ubiquity certifies God, just as nature lends concreteness to Baader’s divine *Ternar*. This connection between human and divine intelligence denoted by number and achieved in divination is also the origin of antiquity’s true and sacred science. The avatar of ancient science in *Les soirées* wears an *ephod*, the part of the ceremonial dress of the high priests of ancient Israel that contained the divinatory objects Urim and Thummim.⁹⁴ Every day, the intimate relationship between science and prophecy so symbolized can be demonstrated by reflecting on any fact—a tendency to democratize and generalize sacred knowledge that would resurface in the mythography of Ballanche.

Describing the postrevolutionary state of the French language, the count transmutes into a prophet versed in historical irony, in the progress wrought by catastrophe, and in the forecast of God’s mind:

Let us reflect [he says] on the *universal tongue*. Never has this title been more becoming to the French language; and what is strange is that its power seems to increase with its sterility. Its great days have passed; yet everyone understands it, everyone speaks it; and I do not even believe there is a city in Europe that does not enclose some men capable of writing it purely. . . . We march toward a great unity that we must *greet from afar*. . . . We are painfully and quite justly crushed; but . . . we are *crushed* only in order to be *mixed*.⁹⁵

With unprecedented violence, the French Revolution has “come to tear out of their places thousands of men destined never to know each other,” making them “turn together like the dust of the fields.” This is the case of *Les soirées*’ three friends: “Though our cradles have been so far apart,” says the

91. Ibid., 766.

92. Ibid., 694.

93. Ibid., 696.

94. See note 49.

95. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 516–17.

count, “perhaps our graves will touch each other.”⁹⁶ In the *Considérations*, devastation had been both punitive and regenerative. In *Les soirées*, it is, more specifically, a globalizing agent that strips humankind of particularities to help it to surpass itself.

This unifying progressivism marked a departure from eighteenth-century historical mystiques. In Bonnet’s *Palingénésie philosophique*, cosmic revolutions annihilated everything but individual souls and their germs, or glorious bodies, which developed into new forms of life during ages of repose. Palingenesis was thus ahistorical, perpetual, nonprogressive, describing simply the succession of biological ages. Other mystical texts of the eighteenth century placed the postcatastrophic dissipation of materiality at the end of days. In *L’homme de désir*, Saint-Martin prophesied: “The pure cult will have driven just men to celestial joys, and to the rest of their soul. The impure cult will have driven the impious to rage, to fury, and to despair. Fruits will be plucked; they will no longer be sown, because there will be no more earth: *everything is consumed*.”⁹⁷

Les soirées mingles palingenesis and Saint-Martin’s Armageddon into a historical theory that preaches periodic apocalypse in the manner of figurism. The senator speaks of the various “eternities” of future epochs, when the world will be materially transformed, and a perfected humanity will unite in spiritual reason. Even these eternities, however, will not last forever: being human for Maistre is a matter of vicissitude, and history will endure until the earth itself disappears once proximity to God has dehumanized us completely. The eleventh dialogue suggests enigmatically that “*time is something forced that asks only to finish*,” and that one day “beyond eternity,” “*when everything is finally consumed, an angel will cry out in the midst of vanishing space: THERE IS NO MORE TIME*.”⁹⁸

Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg is an Enlightened mystique, a theodicy of Leibniz. The consummate individuals of the *Monadologie* are in it, rationally deploying being unto the elimination of pure evil. Also featured is a post-Rousseauian world where the problem of good and evil is no longer exclusively individual, but reoriented toward society as the new subject and agent of virtue and culpability. Historically, *Les soirées* is understandable only as a product of the

96. Ibid., 515.

97. Saint-Martin, *L’homme de désir*, 171.

98. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 764.

philosophical dilemmas posed by the Revolution. It explains instability to a world intensely aware of time, switching between “the ineluctable unfolding of a ‘fixist’ history according to God’s eternal designs and the cyclical movement of a sacralized historical becoming.”⁹⁹ It restores ethical sense to history, envisioning humans as both determined by, and determining of, a newly moral order of nature—rather than as the mere parts of nature, governed by physical laws, described by *philosophie*. And it insists that evil must exist in a world that the human will has proven it can shake so thoroughly.

Nearly fifteen hundred years after Augustine, *Les soirées* introduces the doctrine of corporeal corruption into history. Inventively, it reformulates the problem of evil not only in terms of man’s will and passions as the modern Augustinians had done, but of man’s entire being, including his reason and his body. Even more, it asserts that this evil has historical consequences, and, conversely, that historical salvation exists. Directing history to the good, however, is not only a matter of knowledge, of understanding human history and anatomy—the “sciences of memory” celebrated in *De l’état de nature*. History arises also out of anthropology and especially out of the will and desires of groups and individuals. Augustinian sociology is historicized: private vice and *amour propre* no longer have solely social consequences. When they gain the upper hand, they produce the historical exceptions that, thanks to God’s involvement, bring about progress through catastrophe in the critical ages of the world.

Perhaps most surprising is that, of all of Maistre’s works, *Les soirées* gives the most complete answer to the question of the possibility of perfect liberty under an absolute power that Bossuet had first broached, and that haunted French political theory throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Keeping the individual will solidly integral, Maistre rejects Rousseau’s social absolutism and ascribes to humanity a nearly unbounded freedom. Providence, of course, must ultimately govern. But Maistre’s bold claim is that on occasion, at certain points in time, it can be challenged and defeated, and that these are the moments that make history. Maistre’s language may be mystical and cosmic, but its moral and political implications are unequivocal. *Les soirées* asserts with unshakeable confidence that, in a universe where everything is rationally explicable and ultimately guided by God, there are yet no fixed limits on the power of a wounded humanity, “attached to the throne of the Supreme Being by a supple chain,”¹⁰¹ to save and damn itself across time.

99. Bernard Sarrazin, “Le comte et le sénateur; ou, La double religion de Joseph de Maistre,” *Romantisme* 11 (1976): 17.

100. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, 255.

101. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 199.

♣ PART TWO

Historical Thought in France, 1798–1854

CHAPTER 6

The New Truth of Historical Knowledge

Liberty, Order, and the Rise of the Social Fact, 1797–1848

Straddling epistemology, sociology, historical thinking, and bureaucratic practice, the concept of the social fact evolved inchoately during the first half of the nineteenth century, as moral statisticians gathered facts en masse to govern France, and social theorists and Catholic traditionalists lent them new meanings when assessing the character of politics. In this chapter I argue that the endeavors of these groups were not the disparate exercises they seem. All three depended on seeing facts not only as epistemological but also as *moral* entities that were socially and historically regenerative, or at the very least predictive of the future. All three lent durability and political infallibility to well-integrated societies where social facts were well-known and managed. And all three tended to assume that religion is the consummate social fact—as Durkheim finally explained in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1913).

These convergences were aided by a shared understanding of history that originated partly in Maistre, whose essays on Rousseau provide the earliest textual evidence of a metaphysical theory of moral statistics aimed at modeling historical development. While *De l'état de nature* and *De la souveraineté du peuple* were published only in 1870 (with the first English-language edition

appearing in 1996),¹ their conclusions informed the interpretation of the French Revolution that Maistre put forward in the influential *Considérations sur la France* (1797). A lively and memorable illustration of his statistical theory of history was thus widely available to French readers by the middle of the Directory. According to it, facts are loci of social production and historical generation, the motors and the products of the parabolic trajectory that characterizes the life cycle of all social groupings.

The social thinkers and moral statisticians who applied the *Considérations*' lessons believed that France was going through one of the slumps of its parabola, that it was experiencing a period of social disorder and bad government. They gathered, theorized, and manipulated social facts in the belief that this would help speed up the movement out of the slump. Ultimately, they hoped to establish an unprecedentedly well-organized society that would usher in an age of tranquillity—like the one that Maistre had associated with princely government and the Middle Ages.

Maistre and the Prefects: The Rise of Moral Statistics

Maistrian Providence is not only the terrifying source of merited retribution. It is also the organizing principle of accidents, the force that lends to phenomena a regularity at once unforeseen and discernible. Most particularly, as the vehicle of a divine will deeply concerned with human beings, Maistrian Providence administers those accidents that relate directly to human fate, human institutions, and human states of mind, rather than to material or physical phenomena. Historical events demonstrate this.

The French Revolution is irremediably random—and therefore “marvelous,” miraculous. Historically, it constitutes “the instantaneous fruition of a tree in the month of January.”² Its anomaly represents its doom. The French Republic cannot last, since big republics have never before rolled out of God's dice, and hence lack the endurance of the mediocre—or of what statisticians would later call the normal.³

Simultaneously, however, the Revolution exhibits the normality of violence. “De la destruction violente de l'espèce humaine,” chapter 3 of the *Considérations sur la France*, memorably derives the first statement of the law of conservation of violence by computing European war casualties since

1. Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau: “On the State of Nature” and “On the Sovereignty of the People,”* ed. and trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

2. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 200.

3. *Ibid.*, 219.

the decline of the Roman Republic. History, Maistre concludes, shows that mass social and political violence has always been Europe's lot; that, in a sense, the Revolution is normal. Yet even in conforming to regular patterns, revolutionary violence is exceptional, since, unlike war and sacrifice, those sacred means of expending blood, it knows no bounds and obeys no rules. This is why the French Republic is objectionable. It is not so much that it is unprecedented—although in Maistre's Providential scheme that is already a bad sign—but that it does not actually govern. Rather than maintain tranquillity and order, as all good government must, the Republic permits and manufactures violence on a mass scale. All of Maistre's political thought is a reflection on this fact, an attempt to maximize the incidence of governments and institutions that display their legitimacy and durability by minimizing the violence inherent to the human condition.

Maistre's hypothesis that moral dissolution, political impermanence, and high rates of violence are correlated impacted the French administration. In 1798, the year after the *Considérations* appeared, the prefects of the Directory replaced territorial with social description. They instituted a quiet bureaucratic revolution, suddenly turning statistics into a tool for assessing states of mind rather than material resources. "Moral statistics replaced statistical topography. To know the state of the country, one would henceforth choose to explore society and encode the degree of happiness of citizens, instead of [relating] the variations in the territory."⁴

Although rushed, the transformation was complete by the early years of the Empire, which became, along with the Prussian state, the first bureaucracy to gather moral data systematically on a mass scale. The change was in part inspired by empirical observations of the Revolution's social effects. In dissolving the social bonds of the old order, the Revolution pulverized society into the aggregate of individuals Voltaire had dreamed of—and the "dust of men" Tocqueville deplored. When the Directory's administrators set out to measure the benefits of the new republican values, they were alarmed. Everywhere family mores had degenerated, dissension reigned unloosed in local communities, and, worryingly, the "political character of groupings" seemed lost.⁵ The prefects, whose business it was to contribute to the establishment of a functioning republic, reacted by calling for a return to order, to imperatives with which to direct the people, to the idea of society as an

4. Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, *Déchiffrer la France: La statistique départementale à l'époque napoléonienne* (Paris: Archives contemporaines, 1989), 313.

5. Ibid., 278.

organism needing regulation and a wise legislator. To gather the knowledge needed for social regeneration, they developed “an ethnography of the family, of marriage and of customs.”⁶ Responding to social changes, in short, they exchanged statistical topography for moral statistics.

I would like to suggest, however, that an additional, ideational factor was at work: a statistical Providentialism that keenly resembled Maistre’s, and probably derived from it. After all, social mores had been mutating since 1789, and it seems improbably coincidental that prefects began to measure signs of social disintegration months after the *Considérations*’ publication. Maistre’s influence on Directorial and Napoleonic statistics appears even more likely when considering that the moral statistics of 1798 differed considerably from the moral statistics that the Revolution’s commissars had earlier adopted. The Jacobins had sought to strengthen popular sovereignty by conducting what were possibly the first national opinion polls in history—“a first ethnography of the political.”⁷ But the homogeneous character of this kind of statistics contrasts strikingly with the detailed and diverse social description that the Directory began to institute. Like Maistre, the prefects of 1798 wished to model the moral characteristics of plural, developing social groups. And unlike the Jacobins, they had little interest in the people’s voice. Their quest was to renew sociability in the spirit of the search for order—that mediocre order that Maistre insisted monarchy excels at producing. By measuring human happiness and social coherence in their quotidian expressions, they strove to describe—and ultimately to tame—the moral “forces” that Maistre believed were responsible for the regularities of human fate across time. Even their pragmatism, which required that social and political order be visible in concretely measurable *mœurs*, was reminiscent of Maistre. Its moral qualities identified, France could strive for the spot at the top of the parabola onto which Maistre had plotted the happiest and most glorious moments in the history of nations. Moral statistics, for its part, could become an instrument for managing the political course of time.

Given the monarchist origins of the new measurements, it is perhaps no accident that the government that instituted moral statistics as the science of the state transformed quickly into government by one man. It is probably also no coincidence that this same man not only read the *Considérations* but was so impressed by them that he made their author French—against the latter’s will.⁸

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 286.

8. On Maistre’s reaction to the certificate of nationality sent to him by Napoleon’s government, see OC, 10:409–10.

Maistrian Etiology and the Birth of the Social Fact

As the vehicle of God's will, Maistre's nature contains and conveys the "forces" that guide national fates and render phenomena "good," "general," and "average" in the sense of "right." They are the "moral forces" that, nearly a century later, Emile Durkheim would call "normal" and determining of all social phenomena—the same ones that were believed to underlie and cause all statistical patterns until the 1930s.⁹

The immense influence that this etiology exercised on the development of the idea of the social fact has yet to be appreciated. In *La mesure de l'état* (1994), Éric Brian argues that, during the eighteenth century, "reflection on the regularity and foreseeability of phenomena whose apprehension was necessary to the action of the state [was displaced] from the sphere of monarchical administration toward that of scientific skills." Institutionally, this displacement promoted the state's increasing autonomy from the monarchy's social structures. Epistemologically, it resulted in the scientification and objectification of phenomena that would yield Durkheim's social fact one century later.¹⁰ According to Brian, this process was accompanied by the expulsion of metaphysics from scientific statistics. By the 1810s, the work of Condorcet and Laplace had introduced a rupture between the tradition of eighteenth-century statistics, with all its philosophical interrogations, and nineteenth-century statistics, with its confidence in positive observation and mathematical calculation.¹¹ To statistics' postrevolutionary pioneers, argues Brian, the metaphysical concerns of their precursors seemed futile and incomprehensible, and what metaphysical vestiges their infant science still contained appeared inconsistent with the development of Laplace's calculus. Hence the comment by Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1824) on "how much it was to be desired that theory be rendered more elementary, and made to descend from the high regions of analysis."¹²

The comment itself, however, demonstrates that the desired descent had not occurred; Quetelet further explains that, if he wishes to wrest probability from the "high regions of analysis," his ends are not philosophical, but practical. He wants, he says, not to do away with metaphysics but "to make [probability] accessible to persons who have most often the obligation

9. Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, 158.

10. Brian, *La mesure de l'état*, 348.

11. Ibid., 353–54.

12. Adolphe Quetelet, *Lettres à S.A.R. le duc régnant de Saxe-Cobourg et Gotha, sur la théorie des probabilités, appliquée aux sciences morales et politiques* (Bruxelles: Hayez, 1846), i. Quoted in Brian, *La mesure de l'état*, 353.

to make use of it”—these being legislators and policymakers¹³ such as Ernest I, Duke of Saxony-Coburg, and Gotha (1784–1844) to whom Quetelet is writing his letter. In fact, nineteenth-century statistics’ continual explanatory recourse to the concept of moral forces suggests that Brian’s history of the social fact is incomplete at best. Durkheim himself defined the social fact in the first chapter of *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (1895) as (1) external and preexistent to the individual, and (2) exercising moral restraint and coercive on the individual conscience. Social facts were hence distinguished from all others in being both morally compulsive and irreducible to psychological phenomena. As such, they resembled much more Maistre’s morally charged facts, signifiers of natural chance and the divine will, than the eighteenth century’s stochastic mathematics. This is why Durkheim was much more interested in the capacity of facts to oblige, than in their objectivity.

Nor does Marcel Mauss’s definition of the “total social fact” in the *Essai sur le don* (1923) suggest a statistics stripped of metaphysics and founded on the idea of objectivity. According to Mauss, individuals reveal the “total social fact” to the researchers who study them. The fact therefore originates in the subjective—or, in Maistrian terms, in the individual conscience that is the source of all social and moral right, and all durable institutions. Mauss’s social fact also expresses simultaneously all social institutions, including the state. So it lends little support to the idea that mathematical practice autonomous from the state is integral to French sociological notions of the social fact—at least not those in the Durkheimian lineage to which Mauss belongs, and which Brian is attempting to explain.

That the idea of the social fact is not indebted to the exact sciences becomes even more apparent when considering that Durkheim’s thought derived from the positivism of Auguste Comte, who, despite working as a mathematics instructor, held mathematics in contempt. Comtian sociology was an organic science, a derivative of biology conceived as the antithesis of mathematical sciences like physics and astronomy, which Comte considered primitive and placed on the bottom of the ladder of human knowledge. Not only that, but sociology, at least as he finally defined it, was inherently subjective: the Religion of Humanity that enthroned it was fueled by the emotions. Quetelet would not have approved, and his feelings would have been returned: Comte was so infuriated by his statistics that he coined the term “sociology” to distinguish his work from Quetelet’s “social physics.”¹⁴

13. Quetelet, *Lettres à S.A.R. le duc régnant de Saxe-Cobourg et Gotha*, ii.

14. Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2009), 1:605n.

Maistre is hence a far more probable precursor of the positivist fact than Quetelet, not least because Comte was probably reading Maistre's works while devising the Law of the Three Stages that defined the positivist philosophy of history.¹⁵ After his break with Saint-Simon, when he was effacing the intellectual impact of his former mentor, Comte declared that the nineteenth-century thinker who most influenced him was Maistre;¹⁶ that Maistre was the third-greatest influence on him after Gall and Condorcet;¹⁷ and that Maistre and Condorcet were his main political predecessors. As the *Système de politique positive* (1851–54) explained, positivism required “the combination of two opposite influences, the first revolutionary, the other retrograde, due to Condorcet and to De Maistre, whose meditations found themselves respectively dominated by the French upheaval and the reaction that succeeded it.”¹⁸ Comte's mention of Condorcet might give rise to the objection that Enlightenment mathematics were after all a major influence on positivism. Yet one must remember that Condorcet the social mathematician is a discovery of Keith Baker, and that when the founder of positivism mentioned Condorcet, he was thinking of the philosopher of history. Cogently with this, Comte believed that Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795) was

contradictory, in representing the final progress as preceded by a continual series of retrogradations.

This incoherence motivated the elaboration, where De Maistre worthily appreciated the Middle Ages, at least under the spiritual aspect. The full opportunity of such a rectification was soon confirmed after the decisive return that it occasioned toward our pious and chivalrous ancestors. . . . Instead of destroying Condorcet's project, the influence of De Maistre contributed to consolidating it, by manifesting its essential conditions, in order to facilitate its necessary realization. Worthily completed by the static conceptions of Bonald, the retrograde school made it everywhere felt that the past as a whole could not be understood without immutable respect.

One can therefore reduce the difficulty of constructing the social doctrine to sufficiently reconciling the opposite impulsions of Condorcet and De Maistre, of which the one provides the principal thought and the other the essential complement.¹⁹

15. Ibid., 1:263.

16. Ibid., 1:261.

17. Ibid., 1:305.

18. Auguste Comte, *Système de politique positive* (Paris: L. Mathias, 1851–54), 3:614.

19. Ibid., 3:615.

Maistre was Comte's philosophical litmus test. He had "the particular property" of "serving [Comte] to appreciate the philosophical capacity of people by the attention they [paid] to him."²⁰ Comte accordingly reserved a day in the positivist calendar—the twenty-sixth of the month of Descartes—for the remembrance of Maistre and Bonald. He also canonized *Du pape* by including it in the Positivist Library of the Nineteenth Century. To this day, the Maison d'Auguste Comte in Paris commemorates Comte's intellectual debt to Maistre by exhibiting the latter's portrait in the former's rooms.

Du pape deployed facts logically to develop a moral-historical argument about the political nature of Christian Europe. This illustrated precisely how Comte reasoned about the relationship between fact and truth. He maintained that facts acquire meaning when linked together by reason to form general laws,²¹ and that positivist explanation is the connection between a particular phenomenon and general facts.²² Also, when insisting that scientific knowledge be founded solely on empirical facts because these alone are indisputable, Comte assumed, like Maistre, that facts are inherently "right" in the triple sense of truthful, commonsensical,²³ and morally benign. Historicization was also essential to both thinkers' approach to knowledge: "The universal supremacy of the historical point of view constitutes at once the essential principle of positivism and its general result."²⁴ Nothing can be understood philosophically unless it is understood factually and historically. The resulting contradiction—that a metaphysical notion of the fact became the keystone of an epistemology supposedly free of metaphysics—seems to have escaped Comte.

In repeating itself through time, and in being both truthful and beneficent, the nineteenth-century French fact was also mediocre in Maistre's sense, and normal in Durkheim's. When he defended monarchy as the most "average" government—best and longest suited to a middling humanity—Maistre gave the first rendition of what eventually evolved into the French concept of politically benign, and morally mediocre, normality—a notion that even secular *idéologues* embraced. For Quetelet as for Durkheim, the normal, synonymous with whatever is "good and right," is of necessity morally invested. This is what distinguished French and especially Durkheimian normality from the

20. Quoted by Jean-Yves Pranchère in "Comte," Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1149.

21. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:43.

22. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 67 and 70.

23. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:5, 41.

24. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 3:1.

rival Galtonian postulation of the normal as the amoral “seal of objectivity,” the “neutral bridge between ‘is’ and ‘ought.’”²⁵ The fact’s moral charge in turn presupposed its capacity for social control and its proclivity to *be* socially controlled—another distinctive facet of the French idea of normality. This is why Maistre advocated that religious institutions examine science commonsensically, while Comte proposed that common sense become scholars’ popular tribunal.²⁶

The Social Fact Acquires Authority

Early sociologists and Napoleon’s prefects were not alone in positing the fact as a morally benevolent and self-evident locus of truth. Whereas the eighteenth-century fact was principally an apologetic weapon against the free-thinking imagination, its nineteenth-century successor was the philosophical unit of the real. Echoing Comte, Guizot identified the search for “general facts” as a major goal of his philosophic history.²⁷ For his part, Lamennais, Comte’s confidant during the 1820s,²⁸ believed that, besides being intrinsically true, facts were actually divine. His *Essai d’un système de philosophie catholique* (1830–31) proclaimed originally that the fact is epistemologically obscure, but that it should not be rationally explained, since this would result only in a “sea of doubts” like reason itself.²⁹ Inexplicable dogmas of faith are actually facts or data that are absolutely true and “certain by evidence or by tradition.”³⁰ The argument echoed Maistre’s contention that the incompletely knowable is socially and politically inscribed.

Concomitantly, the fact became historically regenerative, a sacred sign inextricably entwined in, and contributive to, a historical process tending irresistibly toward divinity-as-normality. In this new guise, it lent hope to a period that saw itself as an age of crisis, and that aspired to end suffering once and for all. The idea was that, if we perfect ourselves morally by becoming sufficiently knowledgeable—an unproblematic (and distantly Platonic) process, given that facts themselves *are* moral—if gathering facts about human nature helps us replace historical violence with tranquil social normality, then we may be able to arrest history and, ultimately, free ourselves from it.

25. Hacking, *Taming of Chance*, x.

26. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:48.

27. Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 63.

28. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:408.

29. Quoted in Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 85.

30. *Ibid.*, 84–85.

This was the vision at the heart of Comtian positivism, meant not only as an intellectual system but also as a way of living, a religion steering the way to extrahistorical utopia. The content of the Religion of Humanity itself reflects how central facts were to Comte's attempt to transcend history. With nine sacraments,³¹ multiple long, quotidian prayers,³² eighty-one yearly festivals dedicated to the universal adoration of Humanity,³³ and, for priests, twenty-one years of studious preparation that included an "encyclopedic novitiate,"³⁴ this was a complex cult prescribing moderate mastery of all the general knowledge available to humankind. It manufactured a surfeit of divine facts and ensured their mass assimilation and execution over people's lifetimes in order to help finish the Revolution and push society out of history. It also ensured that positivist society was harmoniously knit, and that positivists lived out the positivist motto: "*Love as Principle; Order as Basis; and Progress as Goal.*"³⁵

The Prophecy of the Past

Maistre became reputed as a prophet in 1814, when Louis XVIII's return to the throne proved that the *Considérations sur la France* (1797) had rightly predicted the Restoration. Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–89), the man who said he had had two masters, Lord Byron (1788–1824) and Maistre, bolstered Maistre's fame as a seer decades later in *Les prophètes du passé* (1851), a tribute to Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand, and Lamennais. Maistre was the star of the book, as well as the subject of five more Aurevillian pieces.³⁶ He inspired the philosophy of history, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics of Barbey, who recorded the "quivering avidity," the "inexpressible enjoyment," the "shudders of pleasure" that he experienced on reading Maistre, whom he called his "most spontaneous love";³⁷ and whose conversational rhetoric he

31. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:129.

32. Ibid., 4:116.

33. Ibid., 4:159.

34. Ibid., 4:261, 267.

35. Ibid., 2:352.

36. When Mallet du Pan's *Mémoires* appeared, Barbey compared them to Maistre's *Lettres et opuscules inédits* and Mirabeau's *Mémoires* in *Le pays*, March 13, 1853. He later published admiring pieces on Albert Blanc's edition of Maistre's diplomatic correspondence in *Le pays* of September 8, 1858, and December 12, 1860. Finally, he wrote a review of Maistre's *Quatre chapitres inédits sur la Russie* (*Le pays*, June 28, 1859) as well as a highly favorable commentary of Maistre's *Oeuvres inédites* in *Le constitutionnel*, July 4, 1870. See Pierre Glaudes, "Barbey d'Aurevilly antimoderne: L'héritage maistrien," in *Esthétique de Barbey d'Aurevilly*, *Études romantiques et dix-neuviémistes* (Paris: Garnier, 2009), 20n.

37. Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Deuxième memorandum*, in *Oeuvres critiques complètes*, ed. Pierre Glaudes and Catherine Mayaux (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006), 2:968, 970.

adopted in his own prose, “Maistre shines first, in the eyes of his junior, by his talents as historian.”³⁸ And indeed *Les prophètes du passé* makes clear that what Barbey most admired in Maistre was his historical sensibility. In the Aurevilian imagination, Maistre was the foremost representative of those “men of the past” who were the only ones able to understand the future.

Barbey’s brand of admiration, however, was rebellious, one more sign of the pleasure he took in contradicting the trends of his time in every possible detail. This becomes clear when comparing him to another descendant of Maistre who was his opposite in this respect, a man who insisted constantly on setting and embracing trends. In “De l’avenir,” an early text that probably inspired the title of his short-lived journal of 1830–31, Lamennais lamented—using a religious style to introduce the profoundly antispiritual theme of oblivion of the present—that his contemporaries were thoroughly unworried about the future:

In this century of indifference and egoism we do not like to hear about the future: it disquiets softened souls, we fear it vaguely; we would like to treat it like the revolution and negotiate with it: but the future does not negotiate; for it is nothing else but the inflexible will of God, who punishes and rewards peoples down here. . . . Faith alone does not fear to exit the present, for the present is not its home. But when we have locked up in this fast life everything that we believe, everything that we desire, everything that we hope, then we become irritated with everything that threatens this fragile building of time, and with time itself. We do not dare to look before us; we hold on furiously to the passing moment, as if trying to hold it back: we sacrifice everything to it, because that moment is everything for the men of the present.³⁹

Thundered in 1823, Lamennais’ complaint was abundantly heard. As I hope this book will show, French social and political thinkers heeded his call and became deeply preoccupied with the future until at least 1848. But not Barbey. He deplored his century’s obsession with progress, and most particularly the contemporary illusion that science would improve society.⁴⁰ In the book of this supreme naysayer, the fashionable desperation for impending times was but another symptom of the *mal du siècle*. “Open up the literature of the other epochs of our history,” he wrote, “you will not

38. Glaudes, “Barbey d’Aurevilly antimoderne,” 25.

39. Lamennais, “De l’avenir,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Le Guillou. 21 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980–1), 8:284–5.

40. Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Les prophètes du passé* (Paris: Louis Hervé, 1851), 13.

find in it this disquiet for the days that do not yet exist; that need to throw oneself forward because one is badly where one is.”⁴¹ Barbey reserved his admiration not for the prophetic ability in itself, but for the fact that it came unprompted, and that it emanated naturally out of historical sensibility. He criticized Ballanche’s “impertinent melancholy” in calling Maistre a “prophet of the past.” And he borrowed the offending phrase to lend it a more felicitous meaning. Far from being mired in bygone ages, Maistre and his fellow traditionalists were the only thinkers of the nineteenth century who could discern the future. *Les prophètes du passé* declines the impressive historical predictions made by its four subjects, especially Bonald, who knew better than anyone “what the facts and opinions of his time locked up and kept for the future.”⁴²

It was a privileged, precious knowledge that its possessors could not control, but that derived from their loyalty to the traditional principles that encapsulate historical experience. Maistre was the greatest among his portending colleagues not because he predicted the future better than they, but because he was the purest vessel of traditional wisdom. Barbey called him “the Genius of Insight” (*le Génie de l’Aperçu*), a man capable of making “ephemeral holes in the thickness of our lacunae, [possessing] a surprised, fragile and discontinuous grasp of what fundamentally escapes us.”⁴³ He attributed this skill to Maistre’s faith, “which breathes too much sublime a prioris, to contest with hypotheses and examine philosophically this great and unique truth of tradition that has become Catholic truth.”⁴⁴ As we saw in part 1, Maistre contested hypotheses, and examined historical facts philosophically, a great deal more than this statement suggests; while his variety of reason was for the most part a posteriori. Barbey’s point, however, is that faith imbues Maistre’s historical method, a “proud abbreviated method” most evident in the opening pages of *Du pape*. There, Maistre sets down “theological infallibility, and deduces from it immediately political infallibility by experience and by history, leaving as sole resource to those who are bitten by the tarantula of discussion to open their heads on facts, if they like.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Maistre and the pious prophets who resemble him can discern immediately which historical facts are “true,” in the sense of enduring and conforming to Providential intent. It was but a light step from this claim to arguing, like

41. Ibid., 11.

42. Ibid., 82.

43. Glaudes, “Barbey d’Aureilly antimoderne,” 40.

44. Barbey d’Aureilly, *Les prophètes du passé*, 18.

45. Ibid., 21n.

Lamennais, that facts themselves are divine, or, like Durkheim, that religion is the greatest among them.

Paradoxically, though the truly devoted are best equipped to discern the future, they do not need or wish to know it. Neither Maistre nor Bonald had aspired to “lift the veil of that Virgin of Time that God has reserved for himself.”⁴⁶ As ever with foretelling, one does it well only if one does not try too hard; and Barbey would have accused most loudly the faithless adepts of progress who sought in Maistre’s works the method they needed to become true prophets in their turn.

The Religious Fact Finishes History

Auguste Comte’s religion died soon after him, but his religious vision left traces in Durkheim’s sociology, the official science of the Third Republic. Like the erudition that Comte required of positivists, the new sociological knowledge was meant to produce responsible and committed citizens. This is why, as professor of education at the Sorbonne, Durkheim made sociology lectures compulsive for all students regardless of their course of study. Social facts would fill the authoritative moral vacuum left by dogma, socializing and politicizing individuals by replicating theology’s functions. Above all, social facts would help stabilize the political regime that had finally brought justice and tranquillity. Hence the rise of the human sciences during the Third Republic: in imparting systematized facts to the masses, they provided the state with its major means of possessing the souls of the French.

A dogmatic collection of beliefs, the sociology of Durkheim the agnostic was framed by a religiously tinged historical thought that was never written down. Durkheim was the last heir of a Francophone tradition of social thought, original in Rousseau, and reinvented by Maistre, whose speculations almost infallibly culminated in religion. Symbolically, the chapter on civil religion caps *Du contrat social*; Maistre, Bonald, Saint-Simon, Comte, and Durkheim himself all wrote their last major work on religion;⁴⁷ while the Saint-Simonians, who began as materialists, turned to religion in their last years under the influence of Ballanche, another early nineteenth-century social theorist, and heir of Maistre, deeply concerned with the sacred. These

46. Ibid., 8.

47. Maistre’s last two works were *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* and *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*; Bonald’s last publication was titled *Discours sur la vie de Jésus-Christ* (1834); Saint-Simon’s final book was *Le nouveau christianisme* (1825), and Comte’s was the *Système de politique positive*; Durkheim closed his career with *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912).

thinkers were widely diverse and diverged on many subjects, not least the character of religion itself; but they all agreed that it was the consummate social fact that was capable of closing history.

Contemporaries sometimes avoided, misunderstood, or sought to attenuate these thinkers' interest in religion as a social reorganizer. His disciple Émile Littré (1801–81) practiced the Religion of Humanity from the very beginning;⁴⁸ but he regretted Comte's decision to emphasize the affective and religious sides of positivism,⁴⁹ fearing that its rites and protocols had gone too far.⁵⁰ Similarly, John Stuart Mill (1806–73) embraced the Religion of Humanity;⁵¹ but he could not interpret the extreme regulative ambitions of the *Système de politique positive* except as distressing evidence of the “melancholy decadence” of a “great intellect.”⁵² During the Saint-Simonian schism, some of the followers of Barthélémy-Prosper Enfantin (1796–1964) also attacked his religious penchants. Jules Lechevalier (1806–62) called for “common sense” rather than a parody of the Christian Church, while Jean Reynaud (1806–63) proclaimed that Saint-Simon had been a man more of politics than religion.⁵³ The Saint-Simonians dissolved partly because they could not agree over whether Saint-Simon had truly wished to establish a cult. Characteristically, Reynaud attributed the “odious” and “ridiculous” development of the Saint-Simonian papacy to the “exaggerated invasion” of the Saint-Simonian hierarchy by Maistrian and Mennaisian thought.⁵⁴

Yet although it took the earnestness of siblings Eugène (dates unknown) and Olinde Rodrigues (1795–1851) to turn them to theology,⁵⁵ the Saint-Simonian leaders were truer than the movement's secular dissenters to the spirit of Saint-Simon's philosophy in the final form that it adopted in *Le nouveau christianisme* (1825). This can be seen by considering the relationship between religion and the Rousseauian sociological tradition. Rousseau's fable had deposited sacrality in society, which he depicted as a “moral person,” a new subject of culpability and virtue, a divine being that accepted sacrifices.

48. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:34.

49. *Ibid.*, 3:39.

50. *Ibid.*, 3:34.

51. *Ibid.*, 2:107–8.

52. John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (Cirencester: Echo Library, 2005), 88.

53. Jean Reynaud, “De la société saint-simonienne et des causes qui ont amené sa dissolution,” in Saint-Amand Bazard and Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, *Aux chefs des églises des départements: Religion saint-simonienne* (Paris: Publications saint-simoniennes, 1830–36), 39–41, 139.

54. *Ibid.*, 25.

55. On Ballanche's role in this conversion, see Albert Joseph George, *Pierre-Simon Ballanche, Precursor of Romanticism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1945), 125.

Desacralizing the fable and divinizing the fact, Maistre broke Rousseau's absolute society into discrete social facts—societies, or social facts—institutions, all possessors of sacredness, that could be assimilated, learned, and produced, and that could, thanks to their concreteness, acquire historical abilities and hasten the universe toward God. Maistre himself thought that Christian knowledge alone could produce historical progress, and the late Saint-Simon, agreeing with him, undertook to perfect Christianity. Comte dissented, seeking a religion worthier of the utopia at the end of time; but the society-religion rapport he conceived of was very similar to those his two mentors put forward. He believed that religion exercises a uniquely effective empire over the passions; that it possesses an unparalleled ability to stimulate the social sympathies and educate people in the ways of love;⁵⁶ and that it is capable, as a result, of finishing history-as-violence. In this ultimately dominant variety of nineteenth-century French social thought, society is a potentially sacred and fundamentally compulsive organization that cannot begin, last, or be perfected without religion, or at least without an equivalent capable of extracting and replicating its functions.

As religion's substitute, Durkheim's sociology is the regulator of the end of time. Scholars often assume that Durkheim's sociology was ahistorical.⁵⁷ Insofar as it did away with Comte's Law of the Three Stages, this is true. Yet Durkheim's sociology was the tacit derivative of a historical philosophy that differed from Comte's on only one major point. Positivism was designed to establish the highest social state, a future society that had not yet arrived. But Durkheim the enthusiastic republican believed that France had already reached its most perfectible—if still deeply historical—form in the Third Republic. The society he described hence seemed synchronic not because it had exited historical time, but because sociology, in order to function optimally, had to expunge history from it. That meant doing away with all utopian dreams of an age of peace. Why look forward to better days when the ideal government was here and now?

Rather than construct alternative futures, the task at hand was to strengthen existing society by gathering social facts, organizing them, and recognizing the religio-dogmatic status of the resulting descriptions. The regular repetitions, the invariable patterns that had before betrayed the hand of Providence now signified the morally valuable and the compelling. Whatever was statistically recurrent was also socially necessary—including crime, suicide,

56. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:347.

57. Robert N. Bellah, "Durkheim and History," *American Sociological Review* 24, 4 (1959): 447–61.

disease, and the plethora of social misfortunes that, with inexorable theoretical consistency, Durkheim called normal.

No fine ear is needed to hear the echoes of the *Considérations*' computation of Europe's military casualties across the centuries, or the count's impromptu, in *Les soirées*, on the timeless regularity of war.

Maistre and Lamennais

Beyond sociology, *Du pape*'s historical facts had a long posterity in the nineteenth century. The book was a best seller that saw at least seventeen editions before 1900.⁵⁸ Its first readers, however, were relatively scant, partly because it was published in Lyon, and partly because, soon after it appeared in 1819, the assassination of Charles Ferdinand, duc de Berry (1778–1820), began to engross popular attention. Five years earlier, Maistre had also earned a reputation as a thorn in the side of the new regime—though through no design of his own—when Bonald protested against Louis XVIII's granting of the Charter by publishing Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, a denunciation of written constitutions.⁵⁹ Nor did the publication of *De l'église gallicane* (1818), with its attacks on the Concordat of 1817, the Restoration's official Gallican child, help Maistre earn French sympathies. An opusculum by Pierre-Élie Senli (fl. 1815–41), a “foreign priest” and Gallican partisan, suggests the strong passions that both *Du pape* and *De l'église gallicane* roused among the religious. Entitled *Purgatoire de feu M. le comte Joseph de Maistre, pour l'expiation de certaines fautes morales qu'il a commises dans ses derniers écrits* (1823), Senli's little book declared its author filled with “horror” at Maistre's “captious and original productions” in *Du pape* and *De l'église gallicane*—but especially in the latter, which he described as a “torrent of atrocious calumnies and insults” descending on the “most select portion of the herd of the divine shepherd.”⁶⁰ With similar conviction, Guillaume-André-René, abbé Baston (1741–1825) devoted no fewer than two volumes of erudition—his last—to assaulting Maistre's ultramontanism. His *Réclamation pour l'Église de France et pour la vérité contre l'ouvrage de M. le comte de Maistre*

58. On *Du pape*'s reception and influence, see Camille Latreille, *Joseph de Maistre et la papauté* (Paris: Hachette, 1906), 239–354, and Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 333–39.

59. Even in 1817, three years after the publication of the *Essai*, Maistre knew nothing about its reception or the circumstances of its publication and wrote to Bonald entreating him to inform him. See OC, 14:115.

60. Pierre-Élie Senli, *Purgatoire de feu M. le comte Joseph de Maistre, ancien ministre de S.M. le Roi de Sardaigne, membre de l'Académie royale des sciences de Turin, etc; pour l'expiation de certaines fautes morales qu'il a commises dans ses derniers écrits* (Paris: Haut-Coeur et Gayet, 1823), v.

intitulé “*Du pape*” et sa suite “*De l’église gallicane*” (1821–24) seconded the government’s decision to prohibit all journals collaborating with it to publish reviews of *Du pape*.⁶¹ In the end, though, and despite these efforts, Gallican fears acquired reality. Impossible to smother, *Du pape* founded political ultramontanist, marking Restoration politics deeply as religious historiography became the instrument of conservative self-destruction that tore the Ultras apart from within.

In this polarized atmosphere, Félicité de Lamennais adopted *Du pape* as his personal credo. The young Breton with a talent for scandal was irresistibly attracted to this inflammatory book that expressed his own values with mastery. In *Le défenseur*—the ultramontanist journal that reunited the *irréductibles* (the indomitable ones) of *Le conservateur*—Lamennais devoted four articles to the book,⁶² praising it without qualification:

One is surprised to find the multitude of new, ingenious, deep insights, which [Maistre’s] work contains. Without neglecting the ordinary proofs of authority and tradition, . . . he establishes invincibly, with proofs of a different nature, the rights of the sovereign pontiff; equally insistent, equally sharp, when he makes heard the voice of antiquity and the voice of reason, which agree, as it should be, to pronounce the same judgment.⁶³

By “proofs of a different nature,” Lamennais meant the historical evidence that *Du pape* summoned in support of its arguments. This evidence became a major source of his polemics and sociohistorical philosophy. The young Breton was fascinated by Maistre’s habit of quoting disparate texts side by side, letting them speak for themselves without commentary, on the assumption that displaying them in this manner was sufficient enlightenment for common sense. This new argumentative method came at an apt time. In the early 1820s, Lamennais was extremely concerned to find a Catholic reconciliation for the varying facts of the world’s religions. Having undergone his own Oriental Renaissance in 1807, and imbibed the traditionalist belief in Schlegel’s primitive revelation, he had accumulated extensive notes on the *Avesta*, the Asiatick Researches, and *The Laws of Manu*, searching incessantly for over a decade for a Catholic means of reconciling their disparities.⁶⁴ The solution that the *Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion* (1817–23)

61. Latreille, *Joseph de Maistre et la papauté*, 257–58.

62. *Le défenseur* (Paris: Nicolle, 1820), 2:1–13, 241–56, 337–52, 433–41.

63. Félicité de Lamennais, “Sur un ouvrage intitulé *Du pape*,” *Le défenseur* (July 1820): 3.

64. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 238.

eventually offered was that Christianity's universal truth—common sense, the timeless equivalent of the primitive revelation—was fragmented and preserved not only in the East, but also, and more democratically, among all the world's cultures.

The *Essai* was enormously successful. But Lamennais himself was not completely convinced by it and continued to believe that its premises needed proof. In 1823, the year the last volume was published, he was still asking Ferdinand von Eckstein (1790–1861) for Oriental documents “on man's original degradation and his expectation of a redeemer,” on “the anticipation of a liberator before Jesus Christ,” and on “the original fall of mankind.”⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Lamennais continued to think of collections of facts as arguments in themselves. In doing this, he echoed Maistre's monarchical theory of the effectiveness of the implicit. For Maistre as for the early Lamennais, facts do not have to be spoken for; their mere presence is eloquent enough. This is why, in *Le défenseur*, the young Breton treated *Du pape* as a source of self-explanatory, commonsensical facts, rather than as an object of interpretation. Of the four articles that he devoted to the book, three were less summaries or evaluations than they were compilations of his own evidence to make *Du pape*'s arguments with *Du pape*'s methods. The second article provided Lamennais' account of the Council of Constance and the Declaration of 1682—two historical subjects treated in *Du pape*—in a manner that gestured toward ultramontanism; the third legitimated papal sovereignty with *Du pape*'s reasoning; the fourth repeated, with new evidence, Maistre's argument that the popes became de facto secular princes during the Dark Ages. Foreshadowing his later socialism, Lamennais lingered over the role that the papacy had played as a protector of the weak. But he denied that the popes could recover the influence over temporals they had exercised in medieval times; and he justified this opinion by elaborating on Maistre's notion that modernity is godless:

The moderns, to prevent the abuse of authority, have imagined rivalries of power instead of a superiority of a spiritual kind; that is to say, they have established a permanent combat in the bosom of the state. Formerly there was a judge, and a judge necessarily disinterested; today there are only parties, with force as their arbiter.⁶⁶

65. Nicolas Burtin, *Un sèmeur d'idées au temps de la restauration, le baron d'Eckstein* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1931), 81.

66. Félicité de Lamennais, “Sur un ouvrage intitulé *Du pape*, par l'auteur des *Considérations sur la France*,” *Le défenseur* (September 1820): 436.

Yet, Lamennais added hopefully, “time . . . will judge what is, as it has judged what was.”⁶⁷ At this point in his career, he still hoped, like Maistre, that modern political ravages would be somehow reversed, since modernity was the enemy of common sense, and common sense represented not only the widely believed and the socially expedient, but also the historically durable.

Common sense, in fact, was so important to Lamennais that his political and spiritual trajectory may be interpreted as a function of the evolution of this notion in his thought. Intellectually speaking, there is very little difference between his Ultra text, *De la religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil* (1825–26), and his later, socialist *Paroles d'un croyant* (1834). The difference lies in the extent of the reasoning. *De la religion* accuses the established civil and political order of obscuring the *vox populi* that is the *vox Dei*; the *Paroles* concludes that that order must hence be rejected, and one's lot cast with the *populus*. If Lamennais deserted Christianity, then, it was in part because he elaborated logically the doctrine of common sense that by the 1820s was common counterrevolutionary property, and that *Du pape* illustrated by using historical facts “commonsensically.” Maistre himself discerned the danger well over a decade before Lamennais started having problems with the church. In his last letter to him, he gently warned the young priest not to “let [his] talent dissipate,” as his doctrine of “universal reason” posed “some real difficulties.”⁶⁸

Lamennais' attachment to things Maistrian was lifelong. It began in the 1810s, extended beyond *Du pape* and his own apostasy, and affected the genesis of his philosophy of history. At least six of his books emulate or recall Maistre's own, to the point that some may be read as rewritten versions of Maistrian projects. Maistre himself noted evidently flattered to the duchesse des Cars that Lamennais' *Essai sur l'indifférence*, whose intellectual maturity surprised him most pleasantly in an author so young,⁶⁹ borrowed amply from his own work:

Let that caste [the clergy] give us as presents many books like that of M. l'abbé de Lamennais, we [the laity] will not be jealous. It would only be up to me, after having read it with enthusiasm, to draw a bit of vanity out of it, since there is in the work more than one proof that the author does me the honor of reading me very attentively.⁷⁰

67. Ibid., 437.

68. OC, 14:236.

69. Ibid., 14:225.

70. Ibid., 14:165.

Maistre meant that the *Essai* picks up the interpretive framework of his own *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'inquisition espagnole* (1815), expands it, and applies it to contemporary France. The *Lettres* had maintained that “tolerance” is nothing but “an absolute indifference in matters of religion” (letter 5); that this “perfect indifferentism” (letter 6) eventually results in uncontrolled and massive violence as well as social disintegration; and that the Spanish Inquisition was consequently less horrible than the *philosophes* insisted. In discussing “the indifference of our century in matters of religion,” letter 2 probably even provided Lamennais with the title of his book. Borrowing, though, accompanied also a natural convergence: Lamennais’ *Réflexions sur l’état de l’église en France pendant le XVIIIe siècle, et sur sa situation actuelle* (1809), an early work replete with traditionalist themes like ecclesiastical freedom and the need for authority in religion, already condemned religious indifferentism.⁷¹

Seeking less to produce original ideas than to further the triumph of a common cause, royalism and traditionalism also lent themselves more readily than other strands of thought to the free and unacknowledged flow of ideas. Picking up on an Enlightenment practice, royalist ethics encouraged anonymous publication to avoid authorial vanity; and if Maistre himself signed all but his first publications, that was in part because his renowned style made anonymity impossible.⁷² His daughter Constance, though, left the one book she published unsigned,⁷³ and took pains even to repress her highly subjective style so as not to be recognized like her father. Maistre’s letter to the duchesse des Cars also suggests that he was pleased rather than offended that Lamennais had taken his thoughts. In fact, he encouraged his young coreligionist to borrow from him:

If you have kindly wished to undertake reviewing my work . . . , you will have found on your way enough materials to furnish a sufficient article without touching directly what are called the *Liberties of the Gallican Church*. I have sown on my way an infinity of features that would all have become something under your fecund quill.⁷⁴

Lamennais hardly needed this kind of encouragement. His plagiarizing caused even conservatives to complain. When his edited translation of the

71. Maistre, however, became aware of Lamennais only when the *Essai* appeared. See *ibid.*, 14:224–25.

72. Blacas and Maistre, *Joseph de Maistre et Blacas*, 23–24.

73. *Des différents états que les filles peuvent embrasser et principalement du célibat . . . par une demoiselle de condition* (1826).

74. OC, 14:226–27.

Imitatio Christi appeared in 1824, an anonymous article by a fellow Catholic showed that it was actually a word-for-word reproduction of the translation that the abbé Eugène de Genoude (1792–1849) had published two years earlier;⁷⁵ while another piece by an unnamed theologian noted gloomily that even the “reflections” that Lamennais inserted after each chapter were the unacknowledged work of the abbé Augustin-Jean Le Tourneur (1775–1844).⁷⁶ Comments like these, though, were rare: Lamennais’ intellectual thefts attracted criticism in the case of the *Imitatio* because the book was a widely read classic, and because a debate raged at the time on its authorship and provenance.⁷⁷ Traditionalists were otherwise happy to find in their agreement one more proof that their cause was a righteous one. Thus, even after his tempestuous friendship and violent break with Lamennais, and even though the last three books of the *Essai sur l’indifférence* were but straightforward summaries of his own thought, method, and erudition,⁷⁸ Eckstein could write proudly that “on a great many points, I have agreed with M. de la Mennais. Both of us were ablaze with the same zeal for the same noble cause; when I do not agree with him, there is no divergence of doctrine or sentiment.”⁷⁹

Lamennais’ *Essai de philosophie chrétienne* of the 1830s blended Leibnizian ontology with Pelagianism to yield a Christian theodicy of Maistrian tinge. The later *Esquisse d’une philosophie*⁸⁰ was a lengthier, deist elaboration of the earlier work, while *De la société première et de ses lois* (1848) again evoked the universe of *Les soirées*, but focusing on the traditionalist theme of the primitive revelation). *De la religion considérée dans ses rapports politiques et civils* (1825–26) similarly echoed *Du pape*. Its table of contents exposes the relentless logic sustaining the young Ultra’s claim that the Bourbon monarchy is atheist:

75. *Examen critique d’une traduction nouvelle de “l’Imitation de Jésus-Christ” par M. de La Mennais; ou, M. de La Mennais convaincu de plagiat* (Paris: Dentu, 1824).

76. *Sur deux traductions nouvelles de “l’Imitation de J.C.” et principalement sur celle de M. Genoude, Lettre d’un docteur en théologie à M. l’abbé de Bonnef . . . à Vienne* (N.p., n.d.), 18.

77. The *érudit* and translator of the *Imitatio* Jean-Baptiste-Modeste Gence (1755–1840) and the journalist and *collectionneur* Mathieu-Guillaume-Thérèse Villenave (1762–1846) were attributing the *Imitatio* to Jean de Gerson.

78. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 458.

79. Quoted by Burtin, *Un sémur d’idées au temps de la restauration*, 225. Burtin cites this text as “K. XIII 29,” presumably a reference to a collection of manuscripts or articles by Eckstein. However I have not been able to find in Burtin’s book any reference to the full title or location of this collection.

80. For a discussion of the *Esquisse* and its reception, see Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 100–105.

Chapter II. That religion, in France, is entirely outside political and civil society, and that in consequence the state is atheist.

Chapter III. That atheism has passed from political and civil society into domestic society.

Chapter IV. That religion, in France, is in the eyes of the law only a thing that one administers. . . .

Chapter VI. On the sovereign Pontiff

- I. No Pope, no Church.
- II. No Church, no Christianity.
- III. No Christianity, no religion, at least for all peoples who were Christian, and in consequence no society.

Chapter 2 reiterates the historical thought of *Du pape* and *De l'église gallicane*. It presents the French Revolution as “a rigorously exact application of the last consequences of Protestantism, which, born of the sad discussions roused by the Occidental schism, itself engendered the philosophy of the eighteenth century.” Each man having been rendered “his own master, his own king, his own God,” “all the bonds uniting men with each other and with their creator are broken,” and only the atheist religion remains.⁸¹ Lamennais also restates Maistre’s theory of the permanence of revolution, maintaining that the doctrines that inspired the Terror have not “for one moment ceased to reign; their authority, far from weakening, legitimates itself every day.” As we saw in chapter 3, the fear that the Revolution had desecrated European kings, reducing them to mere men, haunts *Du pape* in silence, justifying spiritual supremacy over the temporal. But Lamennais radicalizes this fear. Arguing by perversity⁸² with a rhetorical violence that far exceeds Maistre’s own, he concludes that contemporary France is neither Christian nor monarchical.⁸³

Lamennais also extends and inverts Maistre’s arguments to craft his own. Maistre had once observed to him in a letter: “*The Church alone will remain standing in the middle of those vast ruins*. Without doubt, but tell me then, worthy and excellent man, can there be a *church* without a *society*? I think not. *Thus society will be remade by the Church*.”⁸⁴ Point 3 of chapter 6 of *De la reli-*

81. Félicité de Lamennais, *De la religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Bureau du mémorial catholique, 1826), 1:48–49.

82. On argument by perversity, see Hirschman, *Rhetoric of Reaction*.

83. Lamennais, *De la religion*, 2:49.

84. OC, 14:229.

gion turns this statement around to argue that contemporary France, devoid of a public church, is hence devoid also of a society.

De la religion's fatalistic provocations are balanced by an intimation, borrowed from *Du pape*, that the popes made Europe, and that they will one day make the world. Since the establishment of Latin Christendom, the popes have "[directed] without interruption that great spiritual movement and [have been] constantly at the head of society,"⁸⁵ accomplishing the "great regeneration."⁸⁶ So without the church, "what would be Europe, and what would be the world?"⁸⁷ Whether in France, Rome, or Constantinople, whether in republics, monarchies, or empires, the same laws apply to all Christians,⁸⁸ in accordance with the Maistrian dictum that political truth is best approximated within the spiritual order, irrespective of the form of government, and sometimes to the detriment of kings. Lamennais even remembers Maistre's designation of the pope as an arbiter of sovereigns in times of crisis, although on this subject he cites Leibniz's proposal that a European tribunal presided over by the popes be established in Rome to judge nations and monarchs in the name of God, and to prevent war and revolution.⁸⁹

Lamennais' campaign for facts of the mid-1820s turned to indifference by the end of the decade. In fact, an impatience with specificity was latent in his thought from the beginning. Chapter 1 of *De la religion* announces that "it is not [the author's] intention to inquire how Religion . . . modified the institutions of diverse peoples."⁹⁰ And by the time he wrote the *Esquisse d'une philosophie* (1840), his major philosophical synthesis, the truth he was sketching was purely a priori, blissfully unhistorical, and thoroughly untainted by erudition. The culmination of this lack of interest in factuality was the universalism of *De la société première et de ses lois* (1848), which maintained that society embraces "the universality of beings," and that "the Universe is thus but a great society."⁹¹ In this respect, Lamennais' eventual turn to secular socialism may be interpreted as symptomatic of an intellectual regret that no amount of historical fact-gathering could ever establish a Christianity that was universal enough—or at least democratic enough, in the sense of being equally discernible through the facts of the world's various cultures.

85. Lamennais, *De la religion*, 2:36.

86. *Ibid.*, 2:38.

87. *Ibid.*, 2:10.

88. *Ibid.*, 1:6.

89. *Ibid.*, 2:41.

90. *Ibid.*, 1:17.

91. Félicité de Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Le Guillou 18:2–3.

Unlike *Les soirées*' differentiated, bounded, and concrete spheres of existence, ready for history, Lamennais' final, universal society is abstract. "Everything is so bound up and interdependent in human societies as in the universe, that one [cannot] treat a question of any importance, without stirring a great number of others."⁹² An imperceptibly evolving, impeccably rational, and homogeneous universe—a dehistoricized universe—has replaced *Du pape*'s fact-producing pope-church and its liberated, plural nations periodically wracked by catastrophe.

Scholarly Traditionalism: Ozanam, Eckstein, and Bonnetty

Lamennais' posterity, like Maistre's, has its paradoxes. Although he abandoned Catholicism, and although he thought like neither a historian nor a historical theorist, his quest to assemble the facts that would prove the tenets of the *Essai sur l'indifférence* influenced a group of Catholic scholars who sought to construct the future by piecing together the primitive revelation with erudition.

When Frédéric Ozanam (1813–53) was eighteen, Catholics and Saint-Simonians were at loggerheads. As Saint-Simonians preached their new morality, Catholics denounced what they viewed as an oppressive "moral police."⁹³ They also combated Saint-Simonianism with history, as the young Ozanam did when he wielded the primitive revelation to face his enemies head-on. In the *Réflexions sur la doctrine de Saint-Simon*, published in 1831 when he was still a teenager, he argued that Christianity is superior to Saint-Simonianism because it is historically verifiable all the way to the earliest times.

Greek and Roman mythology, Ozanam observed, "simplifies itself in a marvelous manner as one goes back to more ancient centuries," so that, "through the veil of allegory, one can identify the traces of a sublime teaching."⁹⁴ This teaching was found in Egypt and Iran, India and China; among the Finns, the Celts, the Scandinavians, and the Slavs. It was not a "vulgar fetishism" but a "pure monotheism."⁹⁵ The "core of the ancient belief" was "altered"; yet not by sin as in *Les soirées*, but simply by "the difference of times, places,

92. Ibid., 93.

93. Philippe Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique: Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris: Bureaux de l'agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse, et chez Eugène Renduel, 1832), 90.

94. Frédéric Ozanam, *Réflexions sur la doctrine de Saint-Simon* (n.p., 1831), 322.

95. Ibid., 329–30.

political situations.”⁹⁶ The *Réflexions* attacks the Saint-Simonians for having ignored Christianity’s historical factuality (and hence inherent truth): “The religion of Christ being a historical fact, it was in chronological order that it had to be studied.”⁹⁷ Ozanam was probably not familiar with the Saint-Simonian philosophy of history; but even if he had been, it is improbable that he would have approved. Its contents would have seemed to him fantastical and immoral. They would have offered, to his mind, concrete proof of his belief that grand philosophical schemes cannot replace the careful study of the details of tradition; for God only reveals himself through the latter, and only they can prove that, as the *Essai sur l’indifférence* suggested, Christianity possesses a “common sense” that constitutes a “constant revelation” through the ages.

With the possible exception of *Du divorce* (1848), the *Réflexions* was Ozanam’s most polemical work. After 1833, having been asked by a Saint-Simonian why he devoted so much attention to the past when there were so many poor to succor, he founded the *Conférence de la charité*, the future *Société de Saint Vincent de Paul*. Although he went on to write several volumes of historiography and even became a professor of history at the Sorbonne before his premature death at the age of forty, Ozanam henceforth sought to build the Christian future through action, not writing. The loss to the erudite philosophy of history was limited, though: the *Réflexions*’ call for a scholarly defense of Christianity was already being answered in the work of Bonnetty and Eckstein, whom Ozanam knew and praised.⁹⁸

Nicknamed “Baron Sanskrit” for his passionate Indology, Baron Ferdinand von Eckstein (1790–1861), now consigned largely to oblivion, was the foremost representative of the Oriental Renaissance in Paris during the 1830s and 1840s. From a Jewish Danish family recently converted to Protestantism, he was himself converted to Catholicism by Friedrich Schlegel, who probably transmitted Maistre’s thought to him, and invested him with the mission of introducing the Oriental Renaissance into France.⁹⁹ The impact of Maistre’s work on Schlegel was immense. Robert Triomphe has argued, with some exaggeration yet much truth, that “all of Schlegel’s *oeuvre*,” and especially his *Philosophie der Geschichte* (1835), “is nothing but a German answer to Maistrian philosophy.”¹⁰⁰

96. Ibid., 331.

97. Ibid., 361.

98. Ibid., 357.

99. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 13.

100. On Maistre’s influence on Schlegel, see Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 546–49.

Eckstein was a *littérateur* who, like Schlegel, understood literary criticism as literary history.¹⁰¹ For him, writers occupied a place in history that they could not control, but that it was their duty to recognize and favor. Like his contemporaries, Eckstein saw his time as one of crisis and aesthetic anarchy, but believed that if the literary past and present were sufficiently well fathomed, the future could be prophesied. To do so, he developed a tripartite philosophy of literary history, divided into epochs of lyric poetry, epic, and drama corresponding to the social dominance of priests, kings, and people. Though sketchy, the model inspired Victor Hugo (1802–85), who used it in the preface to *Cromwell* (1827).¹⁰²

Like other philosophers of history, Eckstein aimed to transcend politics. In *De l'état actuel des affaires* (1828), he voiced his distrust of parties, and in *De l'Espagne* (1836), a bizarre collage of fragments of fiction, political speculation, and history that “could not be more ill written” and was rather badly received,¹⁰³ he declared that contemporary political parties “are far from the ways of the century, far from the ways of the future, [they] repeat to us a past where they were in turn executioners and victims.”¹⁰⁴ Republics, monarchies, all governments, were “good or bad depending on the spirit that animates them.”¹⁰⁵ The political realm, overall, was either violent or inconsequent, so Eckstein took interest only in “eternal truths” like those of the French Revolution, which could never have been so influential or expanded through war so successfully without containing some verity.

Truth, Eckstein believed, lay locked away in history, not in philosophical systems whose logic was murderous.¹⁰⁶ But truth was inaccessible in his day because humanity had never suffered more or been the object of less compassion: “the aching soul, breathless on the bed of misery, emits cries of despair. Nobody listens to it, nobody approaches it with words of peace, with the look of consolation.”¹⁰⁷ Life was sapped everywhere and the truly living were the dead. In the future, though, humanity would become great by recognizing its limits, and would “dash forward toward the infinite, toward the uncreated.”¹⁰⁸ Drawing the contours of the coming days, Eckstein evoked briefly the history

101. François Berthiot, *Le baron d'Eckstein, journaliste et critique littéraire* (Paris: Éditions des écrivains, 1998), 198.

102. *Ibid.*, 141–44.

103. Burtin, *Un semeur d'idées au temps de la restauration*, 173–74.

104. Ferdinand Eckstein, *De l'Espagne: considérations sur son passé, son présent, son avenir, fragments* (Paris: Bourgogne et Martinet, 1836), iv.

105. *Ibid.*, ix.

106. *Ibid.*, xv–xvi.

107. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

108. *Ibid.*, 9.

of modern Spain, and created the fictional character of Mercédès, a Creole girl who moves to Spain and whose “memoirs” represent the “spirit” of her people. Closely modeled on the Euridice of Ballanche’s *Orphée* (1829)—who symbolizes the spirit of future harmony—Mercédès’ purpose is to retrieve life from private life, since life has gone from the public realm.

This wan and enervated nostalgia belonged to Eckstein the speculative philosopher of history. He had a more hard-nosed alter ego in the Eckstein who put the new German sciences—linguistics, philology, and mythography—to the task of unearthing the primitive revelation, and who regretted that, in mining only historical documents, traditionalists did not use science to improve their knowledge of the world’s peoples, and especially to reconstruct the prehistoric cultures that had possessed divine revelation in its purest form. As Schlegel’s good pupil—and contradicting Lamennais’ democratic impulse to find divine revelation dispersed throughout the world—Eckstein himself concentrated on ancient India.¹⁰⁹ He spent the years 1819–22 at the Bibliothèque nationale, studying the Indic manuscripts that he would promote years later in his journal, *Le catholique* (1826–29). Like Maistre, he viewed the founding texts of Buddhism and Hinduism as testaments of corruption and containers of the precious, hidden *doxa* of primordial wisdom that science could unearth by chipping away at the accretions of ages. In this way, the sacred books of ancient India offered the opportunity to practice, on behalf of divine tradition, the modern paradigm of induction that Maistre had endorsed in *Les soirées* and the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*—and that reappeared, stripped of a speculative historical framework, toward the end of the century.¹¹⁰

Augustin Bonnetty (1798–1879), a member of the Paris Asiatic Society, shared Eckstein’s fascination with Orientalist philology and was dismayed that Catholics did not know more about the East: “Who are the Catholic men who know a little the new aspect that the discoveries made in all the Oriental traditions give to Catholic polemics? They hardly know them through the impassioned and incomplete declamations of M. Quinet or M. Michelet.”¹¹¹ Bonnetty’s journal, the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*,

109. On nineteenth-century traditionalist Indology, see Kenneth R. Stunkel, “India and the Idea of a Primitive Revelation in French Neo-Catholic Thought,” *Journal of Religious History* 8 (1975): 228–39.

110. Carlo Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96–125.

111. Augustin Bonnetty, *Table alphabétique et raisonnée de tous les auteurs sacrés et profanes qui ont été découverts et édités récemment dans les 43 volumes récemment publiés par S.E. le cardinal Mai* (Paris: Moquet, 1850), 1.

founded in 1830 and published until 1913, had the mission of proving religious principles scientifically, of capturing for Catholicism the profane knowledge that flourished among unbelievers:

In this century, which has given itself the sumptuous name of century of lights, and that glorifies itself to see the multiplied branches of human knowledge taught and spread in all the classes of society, the war against Christianity has taken a wholly new form. Unbelief no longer delves, as in the eighteenth century, into sacred books, to disfigure their meaning and expressions; it is no longer through jokes and sarcasms that it attacks the great philosophical and religious truths; it is the very knowledge of the marvels of nature that it turns against their author. . . .

But vain attempts! One can do one's best to make nature lie, . . . to misunderstand the sublime language of the great phenomena it presents to us, and deny the origin of its divine beauties, all the universe has but one voice, and that voice is an Eternal hymn.¹¹²

True to the traditionalist belief that facts speak for themselves, and that their moral value is irrepressible because the divine voice cries out infallibly, the learned Bonnetty set out to save Christianity by writing on an impressive range of subjects, including historical method, the evolution of language and writing, textual criticism, religious history, ethnology, geology, paleontology, and prehistoric archaeology. He believed that he was living in a “moment of effervescence and of crisis,” rich in discoveries, when the human mind “approached the earth with more curiosity,” “[producing] great things.” But all this new knowledge was wasted, since it was “not related to Religion.”¹¹³ Bonnetty's *Annales* would help reverse this situation by investigating science's divine implications and by providing Catholics with the erudition they needed to become polemically effective. In fact, among traditionalists, and compared to many socialists, Bonnetty had a combative mentality whose earnestness almost suggests an appreciation of politics.

Bonnetty made it his life's purpose to demonstrate the tenets of Lamennais' *Essai sur l'indifférence*. His scholarly scope, however, was wider than Eckstein's: he looked not only to the Orient but also to American antiquities, believing he could prove Maistre's and Bonald's contention that the Native Americans descended from a great “prevarication.” His aim, ultimately, was to amass a global erudition diverse enough to develop a philosophy of history.

112. Augustin Bonnetty, “Prospectus,” *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* (Paris, 1830), 1:v–vi.

113. *Ibid.*, vi.

Indeed the development of this philosophy was Bonnetty's "presiding concern," and in an article of the *Annales* entitled "La philosophie de l'histoire en Allemagne," he announced his desire to bring the German philosophy of history to France:

One begins to understand now that Religion as a whole rests on tradition: that is to say on history, and not on reasoning. One must also recognize that if for some time past Christianity and the Church's beneficent influence on the destinies of peoples have come to be better appreciated, it is to historical discoveries that this is attributable, and above all to the progress of that part of historical science which bears the name of Philosophy of History. And yet this science is still little advanced, little known in France. . . . It is in Germany that one must seek the writers who have announced, prepared, partly effected, this rehabilitation of historical science, examining with greater attention and respect God's action on this world, the relationships he has had with his creatures.¹¹⁴

The German author that Bonnetty has in mind is Schlegel, and more particularly his lectures on the philosophy of history of 1828. This is hardly surprising, since, as we saw in chapter 5 in the case of Maistre and Uvarov, Schlegel was the godfather of nineteenth-century European traditionalists, at least in regard to historical matters.¹¹⁵ But Bonnetty did not follow Schlegel slavishly. Rather, he developed a historical model whereby God directs time by endowing humans with the language, thought, senses, mind, and science that they need to become free and autonomous beings. Throughout history, men and women increase their knowledge as they interact with God and discover further truths, accumulating knowledge in a manner reminiscent of Maistre's *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, which Bonnetty may have read. This process has come to a head in the nineteenth century, when truth itself has become historical, surpassing in importance the truth of theology. Indeed it is history, not theology, that is now the source of Catholicism's strength. Bonnetty insisted on this point so pervasively—even advocating that history be included in seminary curricula—that the Catholic Church asked him to sign a document recognizing reason's validity as a vehicle to the divine.¹¹⁶ He

114. Bonnetty, "Philosophie de l'histoire en Allemagne," in *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 11, 6 (1835): 401.

115. On Schlegel's influence on Maistre and Uvarov, see Armenteros, "Preparing the Russian Revolution."

116. "Augustin Bonnetty," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02677a.htm> (accessed March 26, 2009).

had no problem complying, believing, like Schlegel and Maistre, that history is moved by principles at once divine and profoundly rational.

Bonnetty's philosophy of history was the product also of the detailed, scholarly investigation of the process whereby revelation is transmitted through the centuries and across peoples. Erudition was crucial not only because God resides in facts; but also because, in the same way that it transforms truth's nature, history transforms the value it ascribes to facts, tailoring them to the different spirits of different times in order to serve divine and human interests optimally at any moment. One wonders how the Catholic Church would have reacted had it become aware of this rather radical historical relativism—the reason that Bonnetty's system has been compared to Comte's, and dubbed “positivist–historical traditionalism.”¹¹⁷

Christian Libertarianism

Du pape's historical thought survived Lamennais' apostasy and the transformation of Ultras into legitimists after 1830. Book 3's argument that Christianity had enfranchised women and slaves and manufactured civil liberty by fostering order was especially successful. It reappeared in the works of Comte and the Saint-Simonians, and it inspired Catholic thinkers who, in the late 1820s and early 1830s, fought militantly against the state monopoly of education the Napoleonic Code had instituted. The Mennaisians—or the “free school,” as they were then known—led this struggle. Defending pedagogical freedom in *L'avenir*, Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Charles de Montalembert (1810–70) established and directed the Agence pour la défense de la liberté religieuse, whose unremitting petitioning finally brought them to trial.¹¹⁸ The theoretical arm of the movement was led by Philippe Gerbet (1798–1864). In 1832–33, at the request of Frédéric Ozanam and his friends, Gerbet delivered a series of six lectures intended to provide the methodological groundwork for a new science of Catholic historical philosophy.¹¹⁹ Popular and well attended by hundreds of young people, the lectures were

117. Karl-Heinz Neufeld, “La filosofía cristiana de Louis-Eugène Bautain (1796–1867) y Augustin Bonnetty (1798–1879),” in *Filosofía cristiana en el pensamiento católico de los siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Emerich Coreth, Walter M. Neidl, and Georg Pfligersdorfer. Nuevos enfoques en el siglo XIX (Madrid: Encuentro, 1993), 481.

118. On the Mennaisians' role in the conquest of freedom of instruction, see Louis Grimaud, *Histoire de la liberté d'enseignement en France depuis la chute de l'ancien régime jusqu'à nos jours* (Grenoble: Allier frères, 1898), 203–39.

119. Claude Bressolette, *L'abbé Maret: Le combat d'un théologien pour une démocratie chrétienne, 1830–1851* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1877), 90–91.

eventually published by the Agence under the title *Conférences de philosophie catholique: Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* (1832). To my knowledge, this text has not been previously examined, while its author has all but disappeared from scholarship.¹²⁰ Yet both he and his *Conférences* are exceedingly germane to my subject. Not only did Gerbet very likely read Maistre, but his book—which anticipates in many ways Maistre's *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, published in 1836—is unique in detailing the relationship that Catholic thinkers of the 1820s and 1830s posited between knowledge, history, and social organization.

Gerbet chose to speak about the philosophy of history because he thought its study extremely relevant to the struggle that he and the “free school” were then leading for educational freedom. As he declared on opening his first lecture:

I do not know, Messieurs, what will come out of what we begin today. All that is quite puny and obscure: we do not even know what name to give it. All that I know is that the time is coming when Catholic and free universities will arise, . . . that when a great thing must be born, it is ordinarily prefigured by a humble image, which is afterward broken and forgotten.¹²¹

The ultimately forsaken lectures were presumably the “humble image”; and their deliverer “a simple worker, an unskilled worker, a proletarian . . . of Catholic philosophy in the nineteenth century.”¹²² Gerbet believed that he was helping build the future because he was expounding a new science, and all science—in the sense of specialized knowledge—tended to progress across time toward an unreachable goal: “the absolute understanding of all things,”¹²³ “a great and universal intuition.”¹²⁴ This higher wisdom would be prefaced by the completion of Catholic philosophy, which Gerbet claimed had reached adolescence only during the Middle Ages,¹²⁵ but which could become adult in the nineteenth century, when the “highest intelligences” were gravitating toward the faith.¹²⁶

120. The only references to Gerbet I have found are Reardon's description of Gerbet's role in the Mennaisian circle in *Liberalism and Tradition*, 79–81, 92, and Pickering's reference to Gerbet's attempt to save Comte from madness in *Auguste Comte*, 1:360, 387–88.

121. Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, 4–5.

122. *Ibid.*, 49.

123. *Ibid.*, 5.

124. *Ibid.*, 6.

125. *Ibid.*, 9.

126. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

Gerbet believed that his lectures were timely also because the nineteenth century was the age of the philosophy of history. Minds, he wrote, “throw themselves toward the future with an anxious hope. Feeling a whole old order stagger and fall, they ask what will be the new society, the new asylum of humanity. . . . The Philosophy of History, which embraces all times, is thus particularly linked to the needs of ours.”¹²⁷ This was furthermore the case because Christianity, which was gaining prominence as it recovered from revolutionary blows, was itself well suited to historical speculation. In fact, the philosophy of history was its offspring. “Christianity introduced into the world . . . the idea of a universal association, of the organization of the human race on the model of a family”¹²⁸ that is indispensable to the philosophy of history, and the reason why it did not exist in antiquity, which conceived only of fatherlands. Also, Christianity and the philosophy of history were both inherently progressivist: the philosophy of history examined humanity’s evolution toward a higher good; while “the idea of the progress of humanity . . . is a wholly Christian idea” and “Catholic science has constantly maintained the doctrine of progress.”¹²⁹

Gerbet was the only thinker of his time to specify how historical reflection encourages spiritual and psychological development. The philosophy of history, he assured his listeners in the wake of the Revolution of 1830, would

teach you to bear calmly present agitations, and to rest in peace, not on that narrow and repulsive future, which already oppresses and will soon be the past of some men,¹³⁰ but on the large and indestructible future of human society. I will not tell you, Messieurs, that science will suffice to give you superior peace, the peace of the soul: that soul has an even higher origin, it only has one, a good conscience. But the calm that science procures for the spirit, is to the tranquillity of duty what pleasure is to happiness, and, in the midst of our immense troubles, it is already something that intelligence conserve its serenity. This serenity will increase as you learn to contemplate with a purer intelligence the marvelous laws through which God governs the destinies of humanity. Yes, Messieurs, I am intimately convinced . . . that if society advances, at the present time, through storms and reefs, it is to sail around the Cape of Good Hope of the political world.¹³¹

127. Ibid., 14–15.

128. Ibid., 216.

129. Ibid., 31.

130. Presumably the political future.

131. Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, 41–42.

Historical philosophy brings composure to disquieted minds because it shows that politics will one day be overcome. Psychological confidence in turn depends *epistemologically* on the fact that “adhering to certain beliefs, for the sole reason that they are universal and permanent, and, as such, superior to the variable reason of each individual, is to do an act of faith, since faith, taken in its most general philosophical acceptance, consists precisely in adhering to the testimony of a superior reason.”¹³² Thus where Maistre pleads that faith cannot interfere with the practice of science and even encourages discovery, Gerbet argues more forcefully, echoing Malebranche distantly, that faith is required for general knowledge of any kind.

Faith’s shaping of knowledge is socially realized in the continual tension between liberty and order, which Gerbet associates with the temporal and spiritual powers, respectively: “Evidently the order of liberty is to the order of obedience in the same relationship as the order of science to the order of faith. . . . Such is the fundamental character of the union of the spiritual order and the temporal order.”¹³³ Thinking correlatively, Gerbet argues that history arises from interconnected dualities, especially from our “double life,” our oscillation between the “laws of matter” and “divine life itself,”¹³⁴ which has a corollary in the continual tension—and ultimate interdependence—between liberty and order. Applying *Du pape*’s theory that European freedom was created by the epic struggle between spiritual and temporal powers, Gerbet furthermore contends that it is necessary to separate church and state in order to foster freedom of education. This parting, however, is only temporary, since—by virtue of the eternal interplay between faith and liberty—church and state always remain united. Also, “union by liberty is higher and more pure than that which depends on strength,”¹³⁵ so that, with time and under liberty’s empire, “the most reasonable belief will finally triumph over minds.” Gerbet thus awaits patiently “the age still so remote when unity of beliefs [will be] reestablished.”¹³⁶

The precise features of this era remain divinely ambiguous, because the facts enabling the progress that depends on human activity are only partly apprehensible by human minds positioned far, as in *Les soirées*, from the pinnacle of the cosmos:

As the principle of all posterior facts, they [the facts enabling the progress that depends on human activity] appear to us prominent and lu-

132. Ibid., 60.

133. Ibid., 81.

134. Ibid., 24.

135. Ibid., 86.

136. Ibid., 83.

minous insofar as they are governed by the laws that regulate human nature. But, since they link our world to other worlds, our existence to other existences, and . . . we cannot . . . know them completely, they hide from our gazes a part of themselves, and what we perceive is like a vague, obscure form, fleeing and sinking into the brilliant darkness that veils all origins.¹³⁷

Full knowledge of the historical process remains piously beyond the reach of a flawed humanity. But the more immediate historical future is more intelligible. Replaying some of *Du pape*'s themes, Gerbet asserts that the "French spirit," which "contains the germ" of "unity,"¹³⁸ will help fashion a new "Christian republic," akin to the one that formed in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.¹³⁹ With liberty triumphant, poverty will disappear, and the spirit of the earliest Christian communities, which Gerbet looks upon as socioeconomic role models, will be reborn. Reading closely the Gospel of Luke, he concludes that—contrary to the claims of some—the early Christians respected private property but distributed goods in such a way that, as the Evangelist says, "there were no poor among them."¹⁴⁰

The Catholic philosophy of history that Gerbet's *Conférences* was meant to introduce was never executed. The closest that the French nineteenth century ever came to producing it was Bonnetty's massively erudite yet ultimately dispersed *Annales*. Nevertheless, when foreseeing the victory of the "most reasonable belief," Gerbet rightly presaged the imminent future of educational policy. The Guizot law, which allowed primary and secondary private schools to exist, dates from 1833, the year that Gerbet delivered his last lecture. Not coincidentally, some months before the legislation that bears his name was promulgated, François Guizot (1787–1874) himself published the last volume of his *Histoire de la civilisation en France depuis la chute de l'empire romain* (1829–32), a work that—taking its cue either from Maistre, the Mennaisians, or Saint-Simon and Thierry's *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (1814)—argued that celibacy had enabled the Catholic clergy to establish a unique, vast, powerful, and efficient corporation that was yet not a caste and protected political liberty.

Surprisingly for us today, when many scholars continue to think of Maistre as an inflexible authoritarian, French thinkers of the 1830s re-

137. Ibid., 285–86.

138. Ibid., 133.

139. Ibid., 223.

140. Ibid., 244.

garded him as a specialist on both authority and liberty. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, the “Supreme Father” of Saint-Simonianism, declared that “during the long development of the [Saint-Simonian] doctrine, we have found in de MAISTRE and in the Fathers of the Church more or less everything that we have *taught* and even *practiced* on AUTHORITY and LIBERTY.”¹⁴¹ Nor was Maistre’s reputation as a theorist of liberty a fleeting aberration. Long after both Mennaisians and Saint-Simonians had dispersed, the philosophical association between Christianity and liberty that *Du pape* had first exposed persisted in the work of Louis Bautain (1796–1867), nineteenth-century France’s foremost theologian.¹⁴² Although Bautain was a fideist raised on German idealism that one would not expect to be interested in traditionalist rationalism, his ecclesiology was Maistrian. In fact,

if there is one member of the Traditionalist school with whom Bautain has more in common than with all the others, it is de Maistre. . . . Much that is central in Bautain’s theory of knowledge—his theory of innate ideas, for example—may have been derived directly from de Maistre. If his theory is broader and more philosophical than that of the haughty *émigré*, that is due to his deeper knowledge of the history of philosophy, and his contact with German Catholic thought.¹⁴³

In a series of seven sermons that he delivered at Notre Dame on the eve of 1848, and that he published in that year under the title *De la religion et la liberté considérées dans leurs rapports*, Bautain contended, like Maistre, that Christianity was history’s major producer of civil liberty, and that its clergy was politically benign. The church had abolished slavery¹⁴⁴ and turned women into men’s equals, endowing them with a humanity that pagan antiquity, often selling them like objects, had denied them.¹⁴⁵ Like the church of *Du pape*, it was “essentially conservative, the depositary of tradition,” gradually reformist, organic, and alive like the groups and societies it formed. Preexistent, it

141. Enfantin, “Enseignements,” in *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d’Enfantin, précédées de deux notices historiques et publiées par les membres du Conseil institué par Enfantin pour l’exécution de ses dernières volontés*. 47 vols. (Paris: E. Dentu and E. Leroux, 1865–78), 14:76.

142. On Bautain, see Jean-Luc Hiebel and Luc Perrin, eds., *Louis Bautain: L’abbé-philosophe de Strasbourg (1796–1867)* (Strasbourg: ERCAL, 1999), and Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 113–37.

143. Walter Marshall Horton, *The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain* (New York: New York University Press, 1926), 262.

144. Louis Bautain, *La religion et la liberté considérées dans leurs rapports* (Paris: Périsse frères, 1848), 164–65.

145. *Ibid.*, 33.

superseded in its divine mission all the failures of the individuals composing it,¹⁴⁶ a typical social fact that generated history, conserved society, and was inherently moral.

Bautain reproduced the Rousseauian antitheses of freedom–order and slavery–disorder whose alternation generated history in Maistre’s thought. He believed that “the spirit of disorder” was the enemy of liberty, or at least of its true source: “The spirit of disorder, whether in public things, or in private things,” “goes crying everywhere that [the church] is the enemy of liberty.” “In public things,” “the spirit of disorder” “is called the revolutionary spirit; in private life, it is the spirit of urbanity.”¹⁴⁷ This spirit everywhere obscures the fact that all the modern liberties—“moral liberty,” “domestic liberty,” “the liberty of the child,” “the liberty of man vis-à-vis man,”—were all Christian liberties that had been established by the church.¹⁴⁸ Excepting children’s liberty, a new addition, it was a rehearsal of *Du pape*’s argument. But Bautain valued liberty more highly than Maistre; and where Maistre associated democracy with unstable mores, Bautain, even in the late 1840s, adhered still to Lamennais’ egalitarian ideal. Recalling the *Paroles d’un croyant*, he asserted, in a manner that was prophetic and daring at the close of the July Monarchy, that absolute democracy is possible,¹⁴⁹ and that, if liberty is not necessarily conducive to the happiness of peoples, it is certainly worthy of human dignity, of humanity’s “forces, faculties, of its grandeur, of its nobility, and of the success of the great trial to which man is subjected here below.”¹⁵⁰ At the same time, though, Bautain never demanded utopia or extolled democracy as the sole just political expression of Christian liberty. With true historical relativism, he warned, instead—like Maistre—that not all peoples are made for liberty, at least not at all times in their historical development; and that the attempt to impose liberty upon them forcefully is a crime.¹⁵¹

Bautain is *Du pape*’s most faithful transmitter in the first half of the nineteenth century. His church is traditional, his liberties relative, his societies irregularly evolving, yet plural, regenerative, and historically concrete. He bears witness that by the late 1840s sacredness, social factuality, the liberty–order/

146. Ibid., 23.

147. Ibid., 28–29.

148. Ibid., 31.

149. Ibid., 55.

150. Ibid., 61.

151. Ibid., 62–63.

slavery-disorder duality and the ability to direct the course of history had become so closely related in French thought as to be inextricable.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the fact as moral authority and the fact as locus of social and historical production that Maistre had theorized in *De l'état de nature* became commonplaces of traditionalism, positivism, early sociology, and the new science of moral statistics. They acquired multiple identities as the sayings of poets, as the customs and habits of nations, as institutions, governments, the family, the church. Though seemingly incongruent, these various phenomena were theoretically united in that they were all morally imposing and capable of organizing social relations. The Directory's prefects were the first to conclude from this that the very process of gathering and assimilating descriptive moral data massively and systematically could contribute to arresting the moral disintegration that statistical data itself intimated was at work. Decades later, Comte drew similar conclusions, hoping to hasten the end of history by designing an encyclopedic religion requiring years of study to learn. Indeed, the valorization of memory that characterized nineteenth-century French educational paradigms across the disciplines may be partly attributed to this quest to end social disorder, promote liberty, and encourage social integration, by accumulating moral knowledge, including of the past and religion. Though no believer in the power of raw erudition to renew the world, Barbey d'Aurevilly at least suggested that the divine is historically tenacious, and that knowledge of the past enables foretelling. Hence his eulogy of the "prophets of the past," those seers whose traditional values and deep knowledge of the social forms favored by time enabled them to discern the course of time. More systematically, Eckstein, Bonnetty, and the early Lamennais prepared Catholicism's rise on scientific soil, seeking to retrieve the facts of the primitive revelation scattered across cultures and centuries. With time, the project proved too massive to execute. But its mere articulation had political consequences, encouraging progress, most notably, in the field of freedom of education.

That Gerbet's philosophy of history was the intellectual support of the campaign for freedom of education is related to the fact that the conceptual tension between liberty and order was at the heart of nineteenth-century French ideas of the fact. As a morally charged entity, the fact that made up written and lived history was at once socially controllable, socially compulsive, and socially emancipating. This latter aspect of it has remained relatively

unexplored, while traditionalism, early sociology, positivism, and—to some extent—early socialism have been persistently interpreted as authoritarian strands of thought. Yet an examination of the philosophical origins of the social fact suggests that these intellectual traditions were more freedom-imparting than is commonly supposed.

Libertarianism was especially prominent among Catholic thinkers who inherited their sociology of knowledge from Maistre, whether directly or indirectly. In the thought of Bautain, Gerbet, and Lamennais, a traditionalist theory of liberty developed whereby religion, as society's main organizer, produces civil, social, and political freedom by driving social participation and channeling the desire to revolt. If this theory is not discussed in current scholarship, that is because it incorporated counterrevolutionary and metaphysical ideas on the sustenance of order, both social and inward to the individual, that now seem foreign to accounts of modern political liberty as self-realization, freedom from interference, and absence from dependence. In political thought at least, traditionalist freedom—and its counterpart and onetime complement, monarchist freedom—eventually lost the battle. But that they both fought hard and valiantly is amply attested by Joseph de Maistre and his nineteenth-century posterity.

CHAPTER 7

Historical Progress and the Logic of Sacrifice, 1822–54

Postrevolutionary French social thought was unprecedentedly preoccupied with the perpetuity of violence. Victimal theodicies flourished throughout the nineteenth century, with Catholic spirituality as the major medium of transmission. Political conditions facilitated this development. Between Brumaire and 1830, and especially during 1814–25, the government favored the spiritual Counter-Revolution, which became increasingly dolorist as it expressed the mourning of a defeated class.¹ Concomitantly, the aesthetics of suffering infused the arts of a shattered church that encouraged the sanctification of pain as it summoned and reassembled its forces. Victimal spirituality had always been integral to Catholicism; but it was only in the nineteenth century that it was presented as such and formulated coherently, evolving in two main phases: the period between 1789 and 1848, when Christian energies poured into a mysticism of expiation; and the period between 1848 and 1930, when the idea of reparation rose to the fore and “reparatory associations” of the faithful multiplied. These were the years when the church officially recognized devotion to the Sacred Heart (1856); and when the contemplation of the Eucharist became a cult and a mass

1. Gérard Gengembre, *La contre-révolution; ou, L'histoire désespérante*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Imago, 1999), 92 and 97.

phenomenon.² The theoretical background of these developments was a traditionalism of redemption through sacrifice that ran from Maistre and Bonald to *Rome et Lorette* (1841), the pious novel of Louis Veuillot (1813–83).³

The mentality of victimization, sacrificial efficacy, and reparation by pain was not limited to Catholic circles. Ideas on social violence flowed freely between these milieus and other streams of secular and religious thought. Socialists, positivists, and sociologists all absorbed the doctrine of the reversibility of merits. Anxiety about the causes and effects of violence, internalized or expressed, was so widespread in nineteenth-century France that liberals were the only major group of thinkers who did not focus continually on the problem. Even they, however, half possessed a major theorist of expiation in the person of Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847). The will to suffering and atonement also encompassed nineteenth-century French politics, as mourning became a major means of protestation and reconciliation across left and right.⁴

Suffering was likewise featured as a historical motor in historical philosophies derived from Maistre. His contributions to the subject are difficult to overemphasize. Where the Augustinians had previously condemned history as the realm of corruption and other Christians had deemed it irrelevant to the good, Maistre not only saw it, with the Enlightenment, as a medium of moral and epistemological progress. He also exceeded the Enlightenment by identifying it as the locus of spiritual education and salvation through war and sacrifice. Bonald, too, argued that Christ's death made of sacrifice the central social activity, replacing the fear and terror that governed the pre-Christian world with a new law of love, instituted by the Crucifixion and executed in the Mass. But Bonald lacked Maistre's idea of the *doux* and willing victim and, consequently, the theory of the relationship between individual and society that rendered the *Éclaircissement* historical—one reason that nineteenth-century theorists of violence across political and religious spectra refer overwhelmingly to the latter. This chapter explores the role that a notion of sacrifice of Maistrian ancestry played in nineteenth-century

2. Christian Berg, "Théodicées victimales au dix-neuvième siècle en France (de Joseph de Maistre à J.-K. Huysmans)," in *Victims and Victimization in French and Francophone Literature*, ed. Buford Norman, French Literature (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 91.

3. Frank Paul Bowman, "'Precious Blood' in Religion, Literature, Eroticism, and Politics," in *French Romanticism: Intertextual and Interdisciplinary Readings*, 81–105 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

4. Emmanuel Fureix, *La France des larmes: Deuils politiques à l'âge romantique (1814–1840)* (Seyssel: Champ-Vallon, 2009).

French thought as a motor of history and as a symbol and accelerator of the end days.

Regeneration by Sacrifice: The *Imitatio Christi*

Editions of the *Imitatio Christi* offer a good measure of the interest that nineteenth-century French Catholics were disposed to take in Maistre's depiction of the French Revolution as an eschatological antisacrifice. Edited five times and multiply reissued between 1800 and 1848,⁵ the mystical classic became a source of reflection on the historical consequences of sacrifice and on the Revolution as a victimal event. No isolated religious curiosity, it transmitted the concerns of an age obsessed with victimization. Events reinforced this trend. The assassination of the duc de Berry in February of 1820 prompted a new translation by the royalist abbé Eugène de Genoude, dedicated to the duchesse de Berry and published in 1822. Although Genoude did not explicitly compare Christ's sacrifice and the execution of Louis XVI, as did Maistre and Ballanche, his *dedicatio* to the duchesse evoked a parallel between royal victimization and holy suffering. "Where could one find," Genoude asked, "a greater example of everything that Religion can teach of resignation and courage than in the person of Your Royal Highness?"⁶ These were phrases in the spirit of the times. The Restoration saw the apotheosis of royal expiation, especially after Berry's death perpetuated in royalist minds the victimal offering of Louis XVI.⁷ His reigning brother, Louis XVIII, ordered expiatory ceremonies for him and Marie-Antoinette,⁸ and after his "testament" was discovered, the guillotined king was celebrated as France's august intercessor and redeemer⁹—precisely as Maistre had suggested in the *Considérations*, and by compiling a private archive of documents concerning royal deceases.

In his own edited translation of the *Imitatio* (1824), Lamennais added "reflections" at the end of each chapter to help the reader apply its lessons. Although taken partly from the abbé Le Tourneur, these reflections and the book's preface both suggest that Lamennais intended the *Imitatio* to be

5. I do not discuss Gence's French (1820) and Latin (1826) editions of the *Imitatio*, as they were largely philological exercises. Nor do I dwell on Lambinet's edition (1810), which reproduced Goussier's edition of 1660.

6. Thomas à Kempis, *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ*, trans. and ed. Eugène de Genoude, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1822), v.

7. Fureix, *La France des larmes*, 178.

8. *Ibid.*, 107.

9. *Ibid.*, 175–80.

read in accordance with Maistre's reflections on history. Thus where Maistre bemoaned that in a world that had known Revolution there was no choice but to write books, and to honor reason by disserting, Lamennais wrote that rumination had become necessary in a century when "reasoning [had] corrupted and attacked everything."¹⁰ But reasoning should aim concretely to encourage the willing mortification commended by the *Éclaircissement*: "Let the sinner annihilate himself before [Christ], due to his sin; but let the just man also annihilate himself, recognizing that his justice does not belong to him."¹¹ Like Maistre, Lamennais identifies Christ's coming as a watershed in the history of suffering:

Before Jesus Christ appeared, the human race suffered; but secular wise men could neither explain nor relieve this suffering. . . . The Redeemer appears; he imitates the life of men, to give them, in his own, the only model they must imitate; he teaches them that this suffering, born of corruption and sin, is, for them, real, inevitable, but at the same time necessary to sanctify them.¹²

This Christian suffering accelerates the coming of the end days. Lamennais writes—here recalling Maistre and the illuminists rather than Le Tourneur—that the Kingdom of God on earth, when "all veils will be lifted, and all promises will be accomplished," is his cherished hope;¹³ that he dreams of a just Christian society "*where the last will be the first*";¹⁴ and that he thinks of the Eucharist as a historically efficacious sacrifice, a "perpetual miracle," a millenarian machine that, in uniting Christians with God, leads the world to the "times of grace" when "*everything is consumed*."¹⁵ The phrase—which this time is Lamennais'—is nearly identical, down to the italics, to the one that describes the end of time in the eleventh dialogue of *Les soirées*: "*Everything is finally consumed*";¹⁶ and is also used by Saint-Martin to describe the last days.

Later decades, more pessimistic, returned sacrifice to its traditional status as a spiritual activity primarily beneficial to individuals. The man who

10. Thomas à Kempis, *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ*, 2nd ed., [trans. Eugène de Genoude], trans. and ed. Félicité de Lamennais, (Chambéry, 1826), xiv.

11. *Ibid.*, 443.

12. *Ibid.*, 216–17.

13. *Ibid.*, 313–14.

14. Mark 10:31. Thomas à Kempis, *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ*, trans. and ed. Lamennais, 231.

15. *Ibid.*, 389.

16. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 764.

published, in 1852, the *Imitatio* reflecting this latter-day, resigned ethos is a familiar figure—Louis Bautain. Like Lamennais, and as befit a philosopher, Bautain closed each chapter with his own “reflections.” But their sole intent was devotional—to explicate dogma, to encourage Christians to “accept the suffering, the pain of sacrifice”¹⁷—not to hasten better times through self-extinction. Bautain’s scrupulous theological orthodoxy, fortified by his brush with excommunication, may explain this approach. But then so does the fact that, by 1848, the idea that the world might be improved by atonement had vanished in a disillusioned France that, since the century began, had twice spent its violence in revolution.

The exception, as ever, was Auguste Comte, whose practice of “cerebral hygiene”—a self-imposed regime that consisted of reading absolutely nothing except a few select classics—rendered him solidly impervious to intellectual fashions, allowing him to expound on the historical dimensions of the Eucharistic sacrifice:

One cannot . . . avoid or repair the dispersion of sentiments and thoughts except by summarizing synthesis in a special institution, where the principal emotions and conceptions converge. But this need entails two distinct modes of satisfaction, mysteries or utopias, depending on whether religion is theological or positive.

The only decisive example of such a complement had therefore to emanate from Catholicism, instituting, from its beginning, the incomparable sacrament of the Eucharist, to summarize at once its cult, its dogma, and even its regime. This admirable condensation characterized Occidental monotheism to such a degree that it lost all consistency as soon as it was altered.¹⁸

Comte’s admiration for the Eucharist was matched only by that he bore for the *Imitatio*. Calling Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380–1471) “the most sublime of the mystics,” he read the *Imitatio* every night for years and urged his followers to read it as well. He loved to quote the phrase from it that he said had inspired positivism’s motto, “Live for others.” “I love you more than myself and love only because of you.”¹⁹

17. Thomas à Kempis, *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ, nouvelle édition, avec des réflexions, des pratiques nouvelles et des extraits de la traduction de Pierre Corneille*, ed. Louis Bautain (Paris: Furne, 1852), 133.

18. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:273.

19. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:373.

Universal Sacrifice: Gerbet and Lamennais

Perhaps moved by the *Imitatio*, Lamennais and the Mennaisians posited sacrifice as a fact of love. “Sacrifice is the fundamental law of love,” said Gerbet in 1833. “Through sacrifice individual love and universal love merge . . . , since, through it, the individual places his happiness in the service and the happiness of others. This sphere of devotion becomes larger as divine love develops, and one arrives in this way, going from sacrifice to sacrifice, to the supreme sacrifice consummated on the cross by an infinite love.”²⁰ Reenacted continually in the Mass, the “supreme sacrifice” has personal, spiritual consequences as well as social ones:

The precept that strictly obliges the Catholic to enter each week at least, through participation in the public cult, in relation with God and men, tears him away from that fatal solitude where his reason would have become lost, to transport him into a society of reason, of calm, and of love. . . . This powerful diversion, frequently renewed, contributes, more than one commonly thinks, to prevent or arrest the development of madness.²¹

This, Gerbet avers, is why Protestants go mad more frequently than Catholics.²² But the Eucharist cures also social ills, since it is intrinsically equalizing: “Offered in the temple, the [Eucharistic] sacrifice ends only in the cottage of indigence.”²³ All of humanity progresses as a result of the ever-expanding inclusion that sacrifice achieves. Surprisingly for a thinker who condemned slavery, Gerbet goes so far as to insist that the conquest of the Americas might have caused “long pains,” but that “the progress of the human race has . . . not been bought too dear.” Suffering is ever the price of improvement, and he invites his audience to offer itself up in its turn for future generations: “Our life could be quite troubled, quite calamitous; we could be only the prophets of this future; but it will be beautiful at least to die saluting it, it will be more beautiful still, for each of us, to devote even obscure efforts to preparing it.”²⁴

Just as suffering propels history, it must also end in history. Although “it is necessary that there exist perpetually in the human race a principle of

20. Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, 207.

21. Gerbet, *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Bureau du “Mémorial catholique,” 1833), 142–43.

22. *Ibid.*, 140–41.

23. Gerbet, *ibid.*, 175.

24. Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, 43.

abnegation, of renunciation, of sacrifice,” this will be the case only “as long as there are poor, as long as it [is] necessary to elevate to the participation of social advantages the classes struck by a sort of civil and political excommunication, as long as slavery, abjectness, servitude, the proletariat . . . subsist.”²⁵ Like Maistre and Lamennais, Gerbet puts God’s kingdom on earth first, and in doing so, sows unwittingly the seeds of secularization. Because his sacrifice is principally a law of progress, at some point in history, once progress has advanced sufficiently, and once suffering has ended, Christianity, which in his thought seems to live only from its uses, might disappear as well.

After converting to deism, Gerbet’s onetime master and companion drew precisely this conclusion. Lamennais’ *Esquisse d’une philosophie* discusses sacrifice not as a historical, but as a universal phenomenon. Ancient traditions, it assures, were right to represent Creation “as a sort of annihilation and sacrifice of the infinite Being.”²⁶ Creation, in fact, is God’s “continual immolation of himself,” “a mysterious banquet, an immense communion in which all beings participate, a great sacrifice in which all give themselves to all, and where each is at once a performer of sacrifice and a victim.”²⁷ Love

manifests itself on the surface through sacrifice, and since, due to the liberty they enjoy, the love of [intelligent beings] can be ordered, or disordered, sacrifice, depending on which of these loves predominates, can assume two opposite forms. . . . Here . . . we must speak of sacrifice only insofar as it is the manifestation of a love in conformity with . . . eternal laws.

Reproducing Maistre’s similar distinction in the *Éclaircissement*, the ordered and disordered loves of intelligent beings animate sacrifice and revolutionary antisacrifice, respectively and perpetually. Sacrifice integrates on two levels—as a “sacrifice of individuality, according to the measure willed by the universal order, to produce intellectual and moral unity,” and as a “personal and voluntary gift of oneself to others, to produce social unity.”²⁸

Sacrifice, further, defines moral relations and is the basic means of communicating life. “The acts commanded by moral law,” Lamennais writes in *De la société première et de ses lois* (1848), “have sacrifice as their essential moral character. Every duty is devotion, the subordination of oneself to another,

25. Ibid., 206.

26. Félicité de Lamennais, *Esquisse d’une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 14:112.

27. Ibid., 14:358.

28. Ibid., 14:323–24.

whose reason is found in a necessary subordination to God.”²⁹ Every cult has hence incorporated sacrifice since the natural priesthood of the ancient patriarchs.³⁰ Yet—by contrast with the *Imitatio*—sacrifice is now neither violent nor specifically Christian. When it derives from ordered love, it no longer accelerates history toward its righteous end; and when it turns into its own opposite, antisacrifice, it no longer consummates history. Nor does Christ anymore operate the transformation of sacrifice from a bloody, ritual act into an inward and moral one. Where pain and expiation contract time in Maistre’s account, they lose all capacity to accelerate history in Lamennais’.³¹ It is this, and not the love of social equality—already professed, as we have seen, in his edition of the *Imitatio*—that marks Lamennais’ conversion from Catholic traditionalism to secular democratism. The corollary of the conversion is a deist universe without crisis, a calm theodicy where society develops undisturbed, and ignorant of catastrophe.

The Divided Self and Sociology’s Ethic of Submission

Auguste Comte modeled the self-society-history relationship in a manner entirely consonant with the *Éclaircissement*.³² Echoing Christian theology, he described a soul divided between “two sorts of masters, the personal penchants and the social penchants.” When the former prevailed, history and violence resulted. But when the latter ruled, they produced freedom and serenity: antihistory. The affective part of the self generated disorder: “I will argue often, in sociology, that the abortion of the mind is almost always caused by deregulation of the heart or impotence of character, even more than by mental insufficiency.”³³ Submission was therefore the basis of “all real moral discipline,”³⁴ the means of inaugurating a society wherein every individual submitted “normally” to the whole, exalting himself, and effacing his personal will, in acts of self-ruin:

Regenerated souls begin to carry consciously and voluntarily the noble yoke that rebels endure blindly. They bless in this the best source of

29. Félicité de Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 18:194.

30. *Ibid.*, 18:205.

31. See Arthur McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy: The Philosophy of History of Pierre-Simon Balanche* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 393.

32. On sacrifice as a means of self-reintegration in French sociology, see Carolina Armenteros, “Revolutionary Violence and the End of History: The Divided Self in Francophone Thought, 1762–1914,” in *Historicising the French Revolution*, ed. Carolina Armenteros, Tim Blanning, Isabel DiVanna, and Dawn Dodds, 2–38 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008).

33. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 1:727.

34. *Ibid.*, 2:168.

our principal perfectioning, that which not only regulates with dignity our personal wills, but effaces them spontaneously under the harmonious impulsion of sentiment and reason. Convinced that happiness consists, as much as duty, in linking oneself better to the Great Being who embodies the universal order, they tend always to submit more. Our wise activity, in fact, leads only to developing artificially our normal dependence, with the end of tapping outside of ourselves the sole bases that may consolidate any kind of existence for us. . . . Death, the necessary consequence of life, ends up becoming the principal source of its systematization. Private existence alone inspired to my holy and eternal companion³⁵ this profound conviction: “Nothing in life is irrevocable but death.” Nevertheless, it is above all to the collective order that one must apply it.³⁶

Comte represents the current of early nineteenth-century French social thought that sees individual submission on a mass scale transforming humanity and extinguishing history. Lamennais bears witness to it too: “Do you want to renew the face of the earth? Renew yourself inwardly. Dilate your entrails: let them become a sanctuary of love and the world will soon be regenerated.”³⁷ In this context, positivism’s submissive citizens are the counterparts of Maistre’s angels, and of Lamennais’ higher spiritual beings.

This raises the knotty question of Comte’s attitude to the individual. On the one hand, positivism’s abandonment of Christianity entailed indifference to personal destiny, the disowning of the individual: death was nothing but a statistical phenomenon for Comte, a necessity of social evolution.³⁸ On the other hand, it was individuals who made positivist society cohere through self-sacrifice, and they who improved it through practical activity. Not only that, but in encouraging submission by teaching the ways of love, and in stimulating social melioration by commemorating the socially devoted, the Religion of Humanity was supposed to intensify the sense of individuality to a degree unknown in prepositivist regimes.³⁹ The hardy yet extremely dependent social self that resulted contained the paradox that would produce, and terminate, history.

35. A reference to Clotilde de Vaux, Comte’s Platonic lover.

36. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 2:466.

37. Lamennais, *Correspondance générale*, ed. Louis Le Guillou, 9 vols. (Paris: A. Colin, 1973–81), 8 (1981):394–95.

38. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 87 and 89.

39. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:68.

History as Expiation

Pierre-Simon Ballanche, the foremost representative of the Lyon school of mystical Catholic social philosophers, professed penitential doctrines similar to Comte's that were also formed in an engagement with Maistre. Ballanche's first published works—*Du sentiment considéré dans son rapport avec la littérature et les arts* (1801) and the novels *Inès de Castro* (1811) and *Antigone* (1814)—established him as a conventional traditionalist. But when the *Considérations sur la France* was republished in 1814, Ballanche responded by writing the *Essai sur les institutions sociales* (1818), which injected a strong dose of progressivism into his previous religious conservatism. Defending divine “*sentiment*” against “*a certain public reason*” that contemporaries had come to value as the source of institutions,⁴⁰ it emphasized humanity's continuous perfecting,⁴¹ the spiritual idea of progress, and France's spiritual premiership in Europe⁴²—all themes integral to Maistrian historical thought. But the *Essai* worried Maistre. When Ballanche sent him a copy, Maistre thanked him but reproached him for having allowed “the revolutionary spirit” to enter “a very well made mind and an excellent heart,”⁴³ as attested by his Condorcetean phraseology (“the progressive march of the human mind”) and approbation of left-wing contributions to morality like the “emancipation of thought.” Undeterred, however, Ballanche continued to see the Savoyard as a worthy antagonist against whom to define himself. Maistre is the writer cited most frequently in the voluminous *Prolégomènes* (1827) to Ballanche's major, unfinished work, the *Palingénésie sociale*—composed of the essays *L'homme sans nom* (1820), *Orphée* (1829), *La vision d'Hébal* (1831), and *La ville des expiations* (written in the 1830s). Condemning Maistre passionately, but praising him also as “that great man of virtue,” “that beautiful genius,” “that virtuous citizen of a city invaded by solitude,”⁴⁴ the *Prolégomènes* certifies the intellectual relationship of love and hate that Ballanche had with Maistre's writings.

L'homme sans nom, a tale that Ballanche published one year before the *Éclaircissement* appeared (1820), encapsulates his theory of suffering. It tells

40. Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *Essai sur les institutions sociales considérées dans leurs rapports avec les idées nouvelles*, ed. Georges Navet, Corpus des oeuvres de philosophie en langue française (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 22–23.

41. Pierre Glaudes, “Ballanche,” in Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1130.

42. Ballanche, *Essai sur les institutions sociales*, 25.

43. McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*, 114.

44. Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *Prolégomènes, Essais de palingénésie sociale* (Paris: Jules Didot, 1827), 204 and 210.

the story of a regicide *conventionnel* who, repenting of his vote, goes to live in the countryside, where no one knows his name. There, he expiates his crime by abstaining from human company, and by reading no book except the Bible. One day, the narrator, who is walking through the countryside, happens upon his cabin, and the nameless man finally confesses the guilt that oppresses him. He explains that his suffering expiates his own and humanity's crimes, and that the poetic recounting of his story spreads the knowledge of initiation, helping humanity return to God across time. The Christian fall-expiation-redemption triad, present likewise in the Saint-Simonians' tripartite history and in Maistre's Augustinian-illuminist vision of history-as-suffering-and-salvation, is the deep structure of Ballanche's tales.⁴⁵

Prefiguring Gabriel Tarde's mass psychology, the *ex-conventionnel* interprets his vote for death as the triple result of fear, mass peer pressure, and the instinct of self-preservation. He feels doubly culpable for having "prevaricated," and for having condemned his innocent king-father.⁴⁶ At the time of voting, in fact, the nameless man incarnates the *Éclaircissement's* hypocritical antivictim and the revolutionaries of the *Considérations sur la France*, enslaved by the Revolution they believe they lead. The Louis XVI he describes is also a perfectly *doux* scapegoat who resembles the Louis XVI of the *Considérations sur la France*:

He gives his life to his country as the condition of the birth of a new world. France forgiven, and which later will expiate [its crime] through the long wars of the Revolution and the Empire, is redeemed. It needs no new ordeal and no new punishment. It has the right to conserve the modern world born at the price of the blood of Louis XVI.⁴⁷

Like Maistre, Ballanche believes that Louis' execution was an efficacious sacrifice, one more episode in a human history propelled by victims-initiators who inaugurate new ages like Joan of Arc. In the future, when history and epic unite,⁴⁸ these special individuals will be the only protagonists of epic poetry, whose diffusion will accelerate the accumulation and distribution of initiatory knowledge, and salvific self-sacrifice by spiritual elites.

45. Joseph Buche, *L'école mystique de Lyon, 1776–1847* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1935), 152.

46. For an interpretation of Louis' execution as a parricide, see Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

47. Buche, *L'école mystique de Lyon, 1776–1847* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1935), 58.

48. Ballanche anticipated later writers, like Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863) in *La bouteille à la mer*. See George, *Pierre-Simon Ballanche*, 106.

Pain is ever useful in Ballanche, and it endows the nameless man with the acute symbolic vision of Saint-Martin's men of desire.⁴⁹ The nameless man is a prophet, an extraordinary being who possesses "the faculty of seeing what will be in what is" and can even "participate in our future existence."⁵⁰ Recalling the king's execution, he says:

Immobile, with my eyes fixed, I had seen one of the executioners cut off the hair of the august victim, but I did not see the head of my king fall under the iron of torment. A blindfold of light spread out across my dazzled eyes and changed the instant of sacrifice into a celestial apparition. I heard neither what the executioner said in presenting the head to the people nor the sinister cry of triumph that, I was assured, rose of itself from the depths of a gloomy silence.⁵¹

The nameless man continues: "Following that day, Joseph de Maistre wrote: 'There may have been in the heart of Louis XVI a movement, an acceptance capable of saving France.' That movement had taken place in the heart of the august victim, and to enter into the meaning of Joseph de Maistre, I would say that that sublime devotion was enough to redeem France. But," observes also the nameless man, anticipating the dolorism of Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet (1815–80), "the human soul universally redeemed is obliged to redeem itself individually; universal redemption only enters into souls through individual pains, through the expiatory regrets of *nameless victims* who legate to humanity the energetic virtues of the promotion of reconquest."⁵²

This seer, whose pain pulls him out of time and makes him spiritually perceptive, is later incarnated by the main character of *La vision d'Hébal* (1831), who sees all of human history pass before his eyes before expiring exhausted of the grief produced by the sight of so much suffering. A prophet à la Maistre, Hébal experiences historical events rapidly and intensely. However, the fragmentary and mysterious flashes that characterize Maistrian prophecy are replaced in his case with a perception so fulminantly clear that it kills. Throughout Ballanche's *Palingénésie*, aching divination contributes to the process of expiation that, as Hébal discovers, is history's constant and the reason why it marches steadily toward a dual freedom—a liberal variety of just institutions, and a conservative kind of personal triumph over the

49. Bowman, "Illuminism, Utopia, Mythology," 84.

50. Ballanche, *Prologomènes*, 192.

51. Ballanche, "L'homme sans nom," in *Antigone, L'homme sans nom* (Paris: H.-L. Delloye, 1841), 256.

52. Ballanche, 456–7.

passions. Most originally, Ballanche's prophet is an expiatory victim who forms and purifies society—like Thamyras, the blind poet and disciple of the Muses in *Orphée*, whose myth telling civilizes Evandrus and his nascent Etruscan people.

Ballanche believes he is gifted for the discovery of initiatory mythographies. He declares that he has “entered as much as possible into the depths of beliefs [or world traditions],”⁵³ recounting and reinventing Orpheus's myth as a pedagogy whereby “pain is the progressive law of the universe,”⁵⁴ and the lives of extraordinary individuals mirror and nourish humanity's. “Yes,” he says, “I have more than Virgil, incomparably more, the sentiment of those things that I would dare to call divine,” adding in self-justification: “and who would believe in me if I did not believe in myself?”⁵⁵ Endowed with the capacity for perceptive suffering, Ballanche is a hybrid between a celebrant poet-priest-seer and a gentle Christian victim. He is the paragon of self-sacralized writers, those deities of Romanticism.

With time, Ballanche believes, a new clergy, moved by the spirit of divination, will arise. A crossbreed between hierophants and priests, celebrants of a religion that will meld Christianity with all world religions, these “chiefs of the future” will spread the Gospel's promise of progress.⁵⁶ They will be heralds of spiritual equality who, less and less victimized, will disclose the knowledge of initiation to all, enabling everyone to interpret and channel the continual pain that is humanity's common lot—the “disease” of continuous portending that *Les soirées* describes as humanity's inborn and often hidden gift. Ballanche hopes that his poetry and philosophy will help establish the doctrine of the future clergy, which is none other than Maistre's third revelation, but which now has an explicitly expiatory, progressive, and Pelagian content: “Successive perfectioning; trial according to time and place, and always expiation; man making himself, in his social activity as in his individual activity: Is it not in these terms that one may characterize the religion of the human race, whose more or less formal and more or less obscure dogmas rest in all beliefs?”⁵⁷

Mass penance would be needed to prepare the practice of these teachings. As monuments of atonement cropped up around Paris, *Le livre des cent-et-un*

53. Pierre-Simon Ballanche, preface to *Orphée, Essais de palingénésie*, 9 books (Paris: Jules Didot, 1829), 46.

54. Ibid., 52.

55. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 77–78.

56. Glaudes, “Ballanche,” 1131.

57. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 10.

(1832) of Ballanche's friend Charles Nodier (1780–1844) imagined a new capital, "a city of expiations," whose political and religious sins would be exhaustively cleansed by being carved painstakingly into stone. Around the same time, Ballanche wrote *La ville des expiations*, the poetic description of a future prison. Harboring innocent volunteers who would educate and be educated by criminals,⁵⁸ this paradisaical jail would spare its dwellers' lives and teach them the charity and solidarity of Christianity, humanity's religion⁵⁹ and sole moral law.⁶⁰ Outcasts would thus regenerate themselves, while their behavioral code, divinely instituted like all social codes, would "add to the intensity of moral sentiment"⁶¹ and contribute to ending the "painful trial of an immense transformation" that Ballanche, like many of his contemporaries, believed society was experiencing.⁶²

Confronted with this vision of brotherhood with criminals, Maistre's theory of sacrifice seemed to Ballanche like the harsh law of the Orient⁶³ and the Old Testament,⁶⁴ a promotion of brutal political power:⁶⁵

Let us not be surprised if, even today, after the promulgation of the law of grace, M. de Maistre has persisted in not knowing any other salvation for the world than salvation by blood. In the nineteenth century of this law of grace, still inspired by the dreadful genius of punishment and pain, he has dared to depict the executioner as the horror and the bond of human association. "Take away from the world,[""] and it is trembling that I rewrite such expressions, [""]take away from the world this incomprehensible agent, in the same instant, order gives way to chaos, thrones are engulfed, and society disappears." Let us not be surprised if the bane of war is one of the terrible harmonies of the social world; for he will teach us that there is in human blood spilled on the earth, a secret virtue, a virtue of expiation.

Good heavens! Will we have to retrograde to the days of bloody sacrifices?⁶⁶

58. Ibid., 40.

59. Ballanche, *Orphée*, 45.

60. Ballanche, *La ville des expiations* (Paris: H. Falque, 1907), 45.

61. Ibid., 47.

62. Ballanche, *Prolegomènes*, 171.

63. Ballanche, *La ville des expiations*, 16.

64. Ibid., 155.

65. Ballanche, *Prolegomènes*, 201.

66. Ibid., 212. On Ballanche's belief that Christianity had rendered bloody sacrifices unnecessary, see McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*, 88.

Ballanche wrote that he agreed with Maistre regarding ancient but not modern times because “individuality is progress; rigorous solidarity, such as M. de Maistre understands it, is a sort of pantheism that crushes the moral self.”⁶⁷ The interpretation was unjust, ignoring the strong individualism at the core of Maistre’s theories of liberty, sacrifice, and prayer, with their insistence on the fortification and ineradicability of the individual will. But Ballanche never wavered in depicting Maistre as “the man of the old doctrines, the prophet of the past,” whose writings, “full of verve, full of true eloquence, of high philosophy, attest to the energy with which was endowed that civilization that struggles still in its painful agony.”⁶⁸ “That civilization” refers at once to the *ancien régime*, the society of ancient Israel, and Oriental despotism. The three were equivalent because they were governed by a collective “patrician” will, and because they were antitheses of the French Revolution. The latter, though abusive, instituted individualism and marked Christianity’s final passage from the religious to the civil and political spheres.⁶⁹ Continuing down this road, the society of the new dawn will witness the intensification of “plebeian” freedom and individuality—along with the generalization and final dissolution of prophecy.

Unlike Maistre and Comte, Ballanche did not model the self-history relationship as premised on action, with individuals either unleashing disordered violence or helping to finish history with sacrifice. He was instead interested in how history was *perceived* by suffering, inactive individuals. In this, he reflected the thought of Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, another reader of Maistre and member of the Lyon school, whose *De la douleur* (1849) theorized pain as ensuing from passivity. Like Ballanche, Saint-Bonnet believed that pain enables progress because it enlarges the soul. Indeed “pain produces geniuses and poets, because it makes man descend further into his soul than he would have gone himself. One must take things at a certain depth if one wants to have them from their source.”⁷⁰ According to Saint-Bonnet, suffering willingly accepted is a personal means to arrive at God⁷¹ that acquires a rational foundation in Maistre’s theory of sacrifice. As Saint-Bonnet wrote in *De l’unité spirituelle; ou, De la société et de son but au-delà du temps* (1841),

67. Ballanche, *La ville des expiations*, 22.

68. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 204–5.

69. *Ibid.*, 24.

70. Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, *De la douleur*, 3rd ed., first published 1849 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1878), 39–40.

71. *Ibid.*, 14.

anyone who suffers can be consoled if s/he understands Maistre's doctrine of the reversibility of merits.⁷²

Saint-Bonnet, however, was more orthodox than Ballanche, who, closer to Maistre, strove for historical salvation and wished to unravel how sacrifice contributes to social regeneration. Like Maistre, Ballanche argued that Christ impulsed moral progress by relegislating sacrifice, replacing the blood sacrifices of antiquity with the bloodless, quotidian, moral sacrifices of modern and medieval times. Surprisingly, however, and as we saw above, Ballanche accused Maistre of not having discerned this fact—even though it is one of the *Éclaircissement's* central arguments—and of wishing to reinstitute blood sacrifices.⁷³ Similarly, Ballanche indicted Maistre for not understanding that “the punishment of crime cannot efface the crime unless the criminal accepts the punishment”⁷⁴—although the capacity for acceptance defines Maistre's *doux* victim. In all, Ballanche claimed, “the disciples of M. de Maistre will have to take refuge in the thought that there will always be one vein of human blood left open: war.”⁷⁵ This is supposedly because Maistre understood Christianity “no longer [as] the vivifying sign of emancipation, but [as] the silent sign of sacred power.”⁷⁶ As discussed in chapters 3 and 6, though, one of Maistre's original and ultimately influential contentions was that, historically, Christianity is the religion of freedom—for slaves, for women, and, above all, for individuals from their own and other people's passions.

Toward the end of his life, Ballanche wrote an article for a Catholic encyclopedia that, resonating and expanding on the *Éclaircissement*, related the Eucharist to the philosophy of history. It described the Mass as the living symbol of humanity's transformation through social evolution, the vital source of knowledge and history that conveyed all the sacrifices of world religions, and all the dogmas that explain humanity:

The eucharistic dogma of the real presence, according to which the victim has been immolated since the beginning, is a cosmogonic law, i.e., one of the laws by virtue of which the world exists. All sacrifices in other religions are prophecies and emblems of it. The Eucharist is the mystical and living image of the perpetual dogma of the transformation of humanity through social evolution. It contains the dogmas of the

72. Pierre Glaudes, “Blanc de Saint-Bonnet,” in Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1138.

73. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 214.

74. *Ibid.*, 175–76.

75. *Ibid.*, 230.

76. *Ibid.*, 211.

Fall, of rehabilitation, and of mediation that alone explain humanity. Without these doctrines, no philosophy of history is possible because a philosophy of history cannot be anything other than an exposition of the nature of humanity. . . . From the fact that the real presence is the Christian dogma par excellence, it follows that the Church, which alone admits this perpetual dogma of love, is incontestably the depository of the Christian tradition, . . . only the Church . . . is capable of producing the evolution of Catholicism. The cosmogonic doctrines govern the moral world, and since the moral world includes the intellectual world, which in turn includes the laws of the material world, the intellectual world and the laws of the material world are also governed by the cosmogonic doctrines.⁷⁷

Ballanche does explicitly here what Maistre had done implicitly in the essays on Rousseau: he identifies historical thought as the means to know human nature. Ever reluctant to emphasize action, though, Ballanche relates sacrifice and history only epistemologically: the Eucharist stimulates progress not because of the sacrifice it impels, but because of the knowledge it encloses, which *can*, but does not invariably, direct the historical course of Catholicism. It was a variant on the belief, widely rehearsed at the time, that religious facts effect social improvement. Indeed, Ballanche meant nothing else by “initiation.”

Multiplying Priests, Generalizing Sacrifice, Sanctifying Society

With the Eucharist become a historical motor, the theology of sacrifice served institutional reform and survival in a church more than ever dependent on the commitment of laymen. Intensifying devotion to the Holy Sacrament through empathy with Jesus as victim was a means both to welcome the laity into a religious space previously occupied solely by the ordained, and to reverse the Revolution by adoring the Christ-Lamb, the ultimate innocent victim.

The extent of this last belief, however, must remain partly a matter of speculation, owing to the lack of theological material for the first half of the century, when Christians busied themselves reorganizing the church rather

77. McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*, 410–11. This is a summary of Ballanche, “Sur le point de vue catholique de l’encyclopédie,” in MSS 1806–10, Dossier 19, Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon.

than formulating theories.⁷⁸ Bautain excepted, the spiritual masters that became prominent in France during the nineteenth century did so only during its second half.⁷⁹ However, we can gain some insight into the sacrificial theology of the early part of the century from the works of Sylvain-Marie Giraud (1830–85), the superior general of the mission of La Salette. Although he published mostly in the 1860s–80s, the victimal thought of his mature years was the one he learned in the seminary of his youth and the focus of his retreat prior to ordination.

Giraud's major works—*Prêtre et hostie* (1885), *De l'union à Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ dans sa vie de victime* (1870), *De l'esprit et de la vie de sacrifice dans l'état religieux* (1873), and *Immolation et charité dans le gouvernement des âmes* (1876)—all dwell on the link between spiritual progress and Christlike sacrifice; and even those whose titles do not evoke the subject—like *De la vie d'union avec Marie* (1864)—assume the identity between self-sacrifice and Christianity. For Giraud, “the victim's life is none other in reality than the Christian life, a supernatural life that we have received at baptism and that we must each day fortify, develop, and perfect in ourselves by our fidelity to actual grace.”⁸⁰ Giraud's sources are baroque: he quotes Charles de Condren (1588–1641) and Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–57) extensively. The theme of sacrifice recurs through Christian thought. But Giraud innovates by lending a history to the performers of sacrifice. Unlike his baroque models, he recounts how, from its humble beginnings in Adam, the priesthood gradually earned divine approval and communal status, announcing and embodying Christ's mission to the Hebrews:

Finally, when the Lord wished to give himself a particular people, to be the guardian of his promises, and whose entire life would be like a prophecy and a figure of the Messiah and of his Church, there was a Priesthood authentically established by the will and the order of God, and solemnly consecrated to his cult. . . . Ever since then, that Priesthood appeared surrounded by incomparable magnificence.⁸¹

The priesthood reached its zenith in Christ, “the sole and unique Priest of the Father,” whose mission was entirely comprised within his dual role as

78. André Rayez in Certeau et al., *Histoire spirituelle de la France*, 289.

79. Ibid., 349.

80. Quoted *ibid.*, 332.

81. Sylvain-Marie Giraud, *Prêtre et hostie: Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ et son prêtre considérés dans l'éminente dignité du sacerdoce et les saintes dispositions de l'état d'hostie* (Paris, 1885), 1:50.

victim and immolator, “when he offered voluntarily his bloody Sacrifice.”⁸² Since the beginning of the Christian era, the Eucharist has provided a means of union with Christ the victim-priest; and baptism has bestowed on every Christian Christ’s very mission: “Every Christian is priest . . . , in order to offer himself as victim, in unity with the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, before the Father’s majesty. . . . This sanctifying grace is fundamentally a victim’s grace.”⁸³ In recounting, then, Christ’s transformation of sacrifice, Giraud laicizes and democratizes the priesthood,⁸⁴ very much as Maistre had done when declaring that the performance of “diminished versions” of Christ’s sacrifice was every Christian’s prerogative. The difference is that Giraud remained strictly orthodox, never positing Christian sacrifice as a medium of communal and ecclesiastical development through time.

The Mennaisians also preached the secularization of priestly functions. Gerbet spoke of “a new career of charity, that opens before the priesthood, or rather before every Christian, for every Christian is priest to accomplish the sacrifice of charity.”⁸⁵ Similarly, during his second sermon at Notre Dame in 1836, Lamennais’ former companion Henri-Dominique Lacordaire reflected on the “incomprehensible figure of the priest”—invoking the “incomprehensible agent” that was Maistre’s executioner—and on the sacrifices he performed, themselves laws and facts of the universe:

Sacrifice is not a material act, a stone upon which an animal is killed by a man dressed in strange clothes. Sacrifice is evidently a moral, religious, dogmatic act; it has a meaning to which humanity adheres, and everywhere, in fact, humanity has offered it to God in recognition of his sovereignty, as an expiation, as a hope, a means of salvation. This fact is inseparable from dogma, and the dogma that is contained in it consequently has the scientific value of a fact: one can no more despise it, than one can despise the movement of the earth around the sun.⁸⁶

We have here again the idea, explored in the last chapter, of religious actions as soteric facts. But what matters now is that the idea that sacrifice is salvific encouraged the multiplication of the priests who performed it. The explosion of clerical orders in nineteenth-century France—to which Lacordaire

82. Ibid., 1:53.

83. Quoted by Rayez in Certeau et al., *Histoire spirituelle de la France*, 332.

84. See Rayez, *Histoire spirituelle de la France*.

85. Gerbet, *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, 222.

86. Lacordaire, “2ème conférence (1835),” *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, ed. A. Chauvin, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1912–14), I, 161.

himself contributed, reestablishing the Dominicans—found theoretical support in *Du pape*'s exaltation of the clergy, while the *Éclaircissement*'s idea that willing submission is the motor of collective moral progress found ample acceptance at a time when every Christian, wishing to expiate the French Revolution, was becoming a priest with the power to perform sacrifice and generate history. The church's need for the laity was resulting in an equalization of spirituality somewhat resembling the one that Ballanche envisioned in the future, when all plebeians would become prophets-initiators, and—as long as there was history left to make—starters of history with sacerdotal powers.

The Catholic desire to elevate the priesthood and laicize priestly functions reflected and encouraged an impulse, widespread among intellectuals, to push history forward by sanctifying society. Saint-Simon had been among the first to express it. He designed a priesthood, or “Council of Newton,” hierarchically organized into twelve scholars and apostles, and nine *littérateurs* and artists, that would defer to him as pope.⁸⁷ Imitating his master, Comte too designed a “philosophical priesthood” for the society of the future that he would govern pontifically. Positivist priests would be as few as possible, in order to “realize the rare combination of qualities, intellectual and moral, that the priesthood of Humanity requires.”⁸⁸ They would be tender, loving, and generous; honest, energetic, and full of character; known as philosophers or poets, since one can influence others most effectively through poetry and philosophy. They would be required to marry, “in order to experience worthily the affective influences”;⁸⁹ but their “renunciation of wealth [would] be completed by the entire gratuity of all [their] acts, which, not ever requiring special consumption, could not comprise a salary, destined always to replace work materials.”⁹⁰ Priests would be psychiatrists, healing body and soul by contributing to corporal and cerebral unity.⁹¹ They would counter the modern tendency toward “dispersive analysis” by directing speculation toward practical ends;⁹² and they would exercise social excommunication whenever necessary to achieve their goals.⁹³ Above all, priests would be teachers: “Between the sacerdotal constitution and universal education there exists such connectedness that the first cannot be neatly defined as long as the second is

87. Plongeron, “Le christianisme comme messianisme social,” 849.

88. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:253.

89. *Ibid.*, 4:255.

90. *Ibid.*, 4:71.

91. *Ibid.*, 4:75.

92. *Ibid.*, 3:207.

93. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:235.

not sufficiently determined.”⁹⁴ But priests would not be allowed to teach in private schools and would be discouraged from writing:

In order to complete the purification resulting from renunciation to any heritage, it is important that priests of Humanity abstain from all personal profits that their work could procure. Every theoretical service must always be public and free. It pertains to the contemplative class to give to the others the example of a wise moderation in the usage of the word, writing, and especially printing, of which modern anarchy has abused so much. Most usual notions must be transmitted by an active and silent tradition, reserving books to communicate real perfectionings of abstract and general conceptions.⁹⁵

When “anomalies” arose, “sociocracy [would relegate] among the pensionaries of the priesthood incomplete natures who, lacking energy or tenderness, [were] apt only for science.”⁹⁶ Like Maistre, and echoing the eighteenth century’s bibliophobia and suspicion of pedantry, Comte was suspicious of specialized knowledge and the written word. He thought that his contemporaries wrote too much,⁹⁷ and that writing and reading should alike be moderated: “Far from developing the habit of reading, [positivist education] emphasizes constantly how much [reading] hinders meditation, which cannot truly be aided except through the inexhaustible study of poetical masterpieces, always relative to the human problem.”⁹⁸ These were the classics, like the *Imitatio*, that Comte included in the Positivist Library, and that he pondered incessantly. Therefore “the true positivist will be able, even in the clergy, to reduce his library to a hundred volumes.”⁹⁹

“Far,” in short, “from developing discussion, positivist instruction systematizes submission.”¹⁰⁰ In the case of priests, this regime yields at once the meekest, the most dependent, and the most influential members of society, incarnations of the Gospel’s dictum that the last shall be the first in God’s Kingdom.¹⁰¹ The positivist pontiff consummates their condition: “This noble contrast between dependence and ascendancy is above all pronounced in the universal pontiff, who, simple citizen of the human metropolis, with

94. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:252.

95. *Ibid.*, 4:258.

96. *Ibid.*, 4:73.

97. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:396.

98. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:269.

99. *Ibid.*, 4:269.

100. *Ibid.*, 4:272.

101. Mark 10:31.

a salary inferior to the revenue of the least banker, obtains everywhere a free preponderance.”¹⁰² Eventually, positivist priests, along with all true positivists, will become historical actors capable of “improving our situation and above all our nature,”¹⁰³ of finishing history through the constant application of general yet restrained knowledge, and the mass practice of ritual and sacrifice.

The Saint-Simonian Exception

The ideal Saint-Simonian priest was a heterosexual couple. Despite bearing the impressive title of “Supreme Father,” Enfantin thought that neither the social individual nor the priest was a man or woman but a fusion of man and woman. Hence his “call to woman,” his widely ridiculed quest as far as the Levant and Egypt¹⁰⁴ for the female messiah who would bear him the child-Jesus of Saint-Simonianism. It was the heady dawn of Romantic feminism, when socialists appropriated Marian devotion, refashioning it for their own cults.¹⁰⁵

Enfantin and the Saint-Simonians drank deep from traditionalist waters. Materialists in their early days, they turned religious after reading Ballanche’s *Palingénésie sociale*—as Enfantin himself informed Ballanche in a letter of 1829.¹⁰⁶ They also inherited generously, and directly, from Maistre. Olinde Rodrigues, a high priest of the new religion, invited his companions to “read and meditate all the works of Monsieur de Maistre,” recommending his mystical works with particular vehemence.¹⁰⁷ Enfantin’s *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse* (1847) also refers to Maistre more than to Saint-Simon himself; while his priestly prose borrows from Saint-Simon but also from Maistre, declaiming chiliastically on occasion, and mimicking conversation through an abundance of italicized and capitalized words and phrases.

In matters religious, Maistre was the Saint-Simonians’ complement to Saint-Simon. The father of industrial socialism had appointed the sacerdotal elite whose unmatched knowledge would show the way to the new aurora;

102. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:258.

103. Ibid., 4:272.

104. Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 242.

105. Plongeron, “Le christianisme comme messianisme social,” 896–99.

106. A. J. L. Busst, “Ballanche and Saint-Simonianism,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 9 (1972): 290–91. On Ballanche’s link to the Saint-Simonians, see also Antoine Picon, *Les saint-simoniens: Raison, imaginaire et utopie* (Paris: Belin, 2002), 61; Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 57; and George, *Pierre-Simon Ballanche*, 125.

107. Pierre Glaudes, “Saint-Simonisme,” in *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1284.

the Savoyard diplomat detailed the relationship between clerical action and the future, specifying that prayer, prophecy, and ritual were means of social improvement. The Maistre–Saint-Simon combination helps explain why industrial socialists should insist on the priesthood given the negative correlation then existing between ordination rates and industrialization levels.¹⁰⁸ By becoming clerics, the Saint-Simonians sought to neutralize the inequalities and demoralization created by economic exchange.

As for the Saint-Simonians' sacerdotal thought, it subverted all precedents with an insoluble paradox. Although their religion was meant to guarantee "a strong, sincere, and active sentiment" opposed to rationalism and its supposed sterility,¹⁰⁹ and although they acted as a sect—their retreat to Ménilmontant, for instance, recalls the initiatory rites described by anthropologists¹¹⁰—Enfantin and his followers consciously distanced themselves from sectarian models. They had no mysteries, no revelation, a vague God, and no concept of the devil except primitive man.¹¹¹ Enfantin "recognized well the 'dualisms' of the world, like the opposition *flesh/spirit* or *constance/inconstance* (of human nature, notably in love), but he downplayed the tension between them and abstained from value judgments: 'Our faith [. . .] consists in the HARMONY and not in the STRUGGLE of the *two principles*.'" ¹¹²

An unprecedented and unrepeatable situation resulted. Saint-Simonian religion sabotaged religiosity itself. Repudiating moral duality, it rested on a denial of the pure/impure dichotomy that is "the profound basis of all religious cult." The Saint-Simonians imposed on themselves "a task worthy of the alchemists:"¹¹³ that of "making religion with culture,"¹¹⁴ or, to use their terms, of using the "artificial and profane methods" of the critical ages of history (for culture, for them, was born of critique) to bring about the final, organic age.

The Saint-Simonians furthermore denied that willed self-sacrifice could impel historical progress. Enfantin announced ceremoniously:

108. François-André Isambert, "Religion et développement dans la France du XIXe siècle," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 15, 15 (1963): 67–69.

109. Serge Zenkine, "L'utopie religieuse des saint-simoniens: Le sémiotique et le sacré," in *Études saint-simoniennes*, ed. Philippe Régner, Littérature et idéologies (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2002), 33.

110. *Ibid.*, 35.

111. *Ibid.*, 36–37.

112. *Ibid.*, 37.

113. *Ibid.*, 40.

114. *Ibid.*, 53.

To us, GOD has given the mission of calling the world progressively to that UNIVERSAL COMMUNION: he no longer commands us to *exterminate* peoples, or to *immolate* ourselves; for he is ALL THAT IS; far hence from us the barbarous COMMUNION of the *sword*, and the *mystical COMMUNION of the cross*; the law of *blood* is effaced, the days of *sacrifice* have ended, the hour of the COMMUNION OF LOVE has sounded.¹¹⁵

Rather than control and channel the perpetual struggle between passional and spiritual selves, he proposed to end it by denying it. It was a remarkable position. On the one hand, the belief that an aspect of reality could be abolished by simply declaring it so evoked the incantatory will of religion. On the other hand, the aspect to be eliminated was the very one on whose assertion religion depends.

Even more paradoxically, Enfantin's abolition of religion's eternal and indispensable dualities was intended to lend to his religion the ability to "rally" or "bind again" denoted by the Latin *religio*.¹¹⁶ His priest had a historic task:

The entire social problem of the future consists in conceiving how the *sensual appetites* and the *intellectual appetites* can be directed, ordered, combined, separated in each epoch of human civilization, according to humanity's progressive needs. The PRIEST must hence intend to inspire and direct these *two distinct natures*, until now inimical, to direct them in a common love for a common destiny, diminishing without cease the distance that separates them, opposing himself with all his strength, with all his wisdom, with all his love, to the possibility that their mutual approach gives rise to a combat, a DUEL.

This is the politics, this is the government of the future.¹¹⁷

The Saint-Simonian priest's ability to fuse Maistre's "two souls" meant that she-he could bring together the two main types of personalities—people with "intense sentiments" and people with "profound sentiments." Not, however, through Christian marriage, which, in "adding, to the weight of the chain it [forged], these terrible words: *fidelity, eternity*," often condemned one of the parties to march to "*sacrifice*, the true CHRISTIAN *sacrifice*, to the mortification of the *flesh*, to the most horrible torment, to the most

115. Enfantin, "Enseignements," in *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin*, 14:116.

116. On the meaning of *religio* for the Saint-Simonians, see *ibid.*, 40.

117. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, *Réunion générale de la famille: Enseignements du Père Suprême* (Paris: Librairie saint-simonienne, 1832), 7.

hateful hideous CROSS, and yet the conscience of the PRIEST is pure.”¹¹⁸ Rather than enforce such “Satanic” marital horrors, and thanks to his-her unique capacity for love and empathy, the Saint-Simonian priest would become the nexus where all dualities dissolve. Inward struggle would no longer exist—despite the avowed existence of Satan, and hence of a realm of evil—because an external instrument now ended it before it even began. Once pagan priests had demanded “an enemy, a victim to *sacrifice*, a HOST, the FOREIGNER; the Christian priest also had a host, a *sacrifice*, an enemy.” But, announced Enfantin, “the day of *sacrifice* EXTERNAL and INTERNAL, *material* and *spiritual*, is going to end, and with it war, slavery, privileged castes, the domination of woman by man.”¹¹⁹ Rejecting abnegation and encouraging self-expression, the Saint-Simonian priest midwived the universal and harmonious blending of humanity into a finally coherent one.

The scandal was that the priest could do this sexually. Enfantin’s “secret doctrine”—the one that prompted Pierre Leroux (1797–1871) and others to leave the community—preached that the sexes could cease their enmity and achieve equality through freedoms that included the sexual intervention of third parties, notably the exceptionally intuitive priest. The stabilization of marriage and of all social life by this means would affect history, which had itself never been anything other than “a series of *interventions* from man to man, or from people to people,”¹²⁰ but which would now finally finish thanks to the right kind of intervention.

Astonishingly, Maistre popped up yet again, even in this most inconceivable of places. Saint-Amand Bazard (1791–1832), Enfantin’s former fellow “Supreme Father,” never professed the “secret doctrine” himself, but he prepared it by using Maistre’s historical defense of Christianity to justify divorce and the idea of the married priest:

The celibacy of Catholic priests, as M. de Maistre has very well observed, was dependent on considerations of discipline, not of dogma; and these considerations were founded principally on the need to disengage the members of the clergy from all local attachments, all personal links, from all servitude to temporal powers. . . .

118. Enfantin, “Enseignements,” in *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d’Enfantin*, 17:53.

119. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, “XV^e article: Organisation religieuse; Le prêtre. L’homme et la femme,” in *Économie politique et politique: Religion saint-simonienne; Articles extraits du Globe* (Paris: Bureau du Globe, 1831), 171.

120. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, “Politique européenne: L’intervention,” in *Économie politique et politique*, 4.

The obstacle raised to divorce by Catholicism is not any more a consequence of its dogma on the eternity of matter, but a high measure of circumstance, necessitated by the moral state of the peoples that it had received the mission of converting.¹²¹

In early Christian societies, Bazard observes—recalling Maistre’s deploration of the polygamic despotism endured by Oriental women—allowing divorce would have meant reinstituting pagan polygamy and returning women to their former state of slavery. Bazard reasons like a Catholic theologian: he assumes that God prescribed different things at different times (like the diverging laws of the Old and New Testaments) in order to adapt his teachings to different stages of human spiritual development. Subversively, though, he historicizes this reasoning to aver—against its practitioners—that what made sense in early Christian societies is retrograde in modern ones.

“*My book will only do evil*,” wrote Maistre to his daughter Constance regarding *Du pape* in a moment of despondency.¹²² Given the uses that the Saint-Simonians made of it, he seems to have judged rightly according to his values. One can hear Maistre turning and screaming in his grave on learning that *Du pape*’s arguments had become useful to a doctrine that instituted the marriage of priest-couples and the priesthood and community of women, along with orgiastic sexual relations and divorce or “successive polygamy.” Indeed, one wonders whether the Saint-Simonians used Maistre’s arguments to develop their own by mere affinity, or whether they derived a perverse pleasure from the exercise. If pleasure it was, it became common in the socialist movement, which excelled at applying Maistre’s thought in incongruous contexts. Thus, in 1841, the Fourierist Édouard de Pompéry (1812–95)—a future editor of *Les soirées* (1891)—referred to Maistre’s theodicy (rather than to, say, Newton’s physics) when promoting an idea so thoroughly un-Maistrian as Fourier’s law of universal attraction: “Attraction, *the magic wand, the permanent compass of revelation*, Attraction, as M. de Maistre says, moves angels, men, animals and brute matter. It is the universal law of life.”¹²³

121. Saint-Amand Bazard, “Relations des hommes et des femmes: Mariage; Divorce,” in *Aux chefs des églises des départements: Religion saint-simonienne*, ed. Saint-Amand Bazard (Paris: Publications saint-simoniennes, 1830–36), 11. See also page 20.

122. Quoted in Lovie, “Constance de Maistre,” 164.

123. Édouard de Pompéry, *Théorie de l’association et de l’unité universelle de C. Fourier: Introduction religieuse et philosophique* (Paris: Capelle, 1841), 343. I have been unable to find in Maistre’s works any reference to attraction that could serve as the source of this passage. This suggests that if Pompéry mentioned Maistre, it was less because his ideas harmonized with Fourier’s precisely than because, by the 1840s, the count had acquired the status of an authority among socialists.

Enfantin's bid to replace the life of sacrifice with the "life of abandonment"¹²⁴ spelled the end of his sacerdotaly. Personality clashes between the leaders have been cited to explain the disintegration of the Saint-Simonians ever since Louis Reybaud first wrote on the subject.¹²⁵ Most important, however, the revelation of Enfantin's "secret doctrine" put his followers' faith to a test it mostly failed. Bazard, Lazare Hippolyte Carnot (1801–88), Pierre Dugied (1798–1879), and Leroux all objected and led others like Lechevalier and Abel Transon (1805–76) to secede from the group for other reasons. Jealous of France's dominant religion, Enfantin noted bitterly of his opponents: "To combat us, all will become *Christians*."¹²⁶ It was a way of saying that all conceived of sacrifice—which, in his parlance, meant the restriction of sexual activity to permanent monogamy—as socially indispensable. It was also a way of saying that none could conceive, like him, of all human relationships—especially (and perplexingly) sexual relationships—as potentially devoid of violence. That is why his end of time was utterly unique, filled not, like Maistre's, with gloriously bodied angels purified by pain, but with empathetic sexual beings who had not known pain at all.

To accelerate history toward a benign end, traditionalists and socialists, legitimists and positivists of the 1820s and 1830s developed two closely related ideas found in Maistre. The first, exemplified by Ballanche, Comte, the Mennaisians, and Catholic theologians, was an ethic of compliance and self-sacrifice that consecrated society by compelling individuals to restrain their passions and obey moral imperatives, with the ultimate aim of manufacturing "regenerated souls"—or, in Maistre's vocabulary, *doux* victims—on a mass scale. The intellectual vogue it started was not confined to France, or to the buoyant years before 1848. The figure of the expiatory victim that Maistre had been the first to theorize sociologically reappeared as humanity's founder in the thought of Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Arthur Maurice Hocart (1883–1939), Henri Hubert (1872–1927), Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), and William Robertson Smith (1846–94).¹²⁷ In the later

124. Enfantin, *Réunion générale de la famille*, 5.

125. Louis Reybaud, *Études sur les réformateurs ou socialistes modernes*, 6th ed. (Paris: Guillaumin, 1849).

126. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, "2^e enseignement: L'histoire," in *Réunion générale de la famille*, 112.

127. See Lucien Scubla, "René Girard; ou, La renaissance de l'anthropologie religieuse," *René Girard* (Paris: L'Herne, 2008), 105–9.

part of the twentieth century, it resurfaced as the central character of myth and the keystone of society in the anthropology of René Girard (1923–), whose *La violence et le sacré* (1972) cites the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* in its opening pages. Nor have French thinkers forgotten the lessons in efficacious sacrifice that Maistre was the first to give: across the centuries Barbey d'Aureville, Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), Léon Bloy (1846–1917), Henry Bordeaux (1870–1963), Paul Bourget (1852–1935), Emil Cioran (1911–95), Pierre Klossowski (1905–2001), and Adalbert de Vogüé (1924–) have all returned to the theme like clockwork.

In addition, and by extension, nineteenth-century thinkers sought to make society holy by exalting, generalizing, and democratizing the priesthood, along with its sacred prerogatives. Because sacrifice is the priest's major function, and because since Maistre its Christian version could be construed as any form of inward, self-directed violence performed for the social good, it followed that individuals acted as priests every time they strove to comply with external directives, or helped other people do so. The spread of this belief was facilitated by the social predicament of a damaged church that, seeking at once to escape history and regain its sacred public status, tended to endow laymen with the power to sanctify. But it made similar sense to socialists and positivists who were establishing new movements on religious authorities. And it suited Ballanche, as he reconciled liberalism and tradition with an egalitarian philosophy of history where priests were poets and prophets, and where one day, near the end days, everyone would become a victimal priest-poet-prophet capable of initiating humanity.

In their bid to resolve all religious dualities, the Saint-Simonians, for their part, sought to sacralize society by unbinding the emotions. It was the unthinkable gesture that portended the imminent drama in the intellectual life of Lamennais, who, as he receded from Christianity, abandoned ideas of progress by sacrifice and, refusing to explain history by duality, finally forsook history itself.

CHAPTER 8

The Metapolitics of History

Socialism, Positivism, and Tradition, 1820–48

Maistre's nineteenth-century readers—liberals and conservatives, socialists and traditionalists, Catholics and atheists, social programmers and *littérateurs*—all agreed, despite their differences, on one thing: that he was a great specialist of the past and, for that reason, a man who knew much about the future. This was what Ballanche had in mind when, with “impertinent melancholy”¹ or “sweetish perfidy,”² depending on the expression that one prefers, he dubbed Maistre a “prophet of the past.” The Hegelian Eugène Lerminier perhaps expressed the common opinion best when he wrote that Maistre “had perhaps no equal in that power to inundate the past with light.”³

Studying history to read the future, the nineteenth-century social thinkers who inherited from Maistre divided history into different epochs characterized by various types of religious organization, political regimes, and epistemological paradigms. If during the Restoration history was the language of politics, during 1814–54 the speculative philosophy of history was the metapolitics of morals, the authoritative locus for the production of good and evil, the key to transcending politics and to abandoning the state. Not

1. Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Les prophètes du passé*, 1–2.

2. Barthelet, “Un demi-jour doré . . .,” in *Joseph de Maistre*, 20.

3. Eugène Lerminier, “L'interprète du passé,” in *Joseph de Maistre*, 747.

surprisingly, the speculative philosophy of history enjoyed special currency among the rejects of politics—Saint-Simon, the Saint-Simonians, Comte, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65)—among those whose views straddled the political spectrum—Ballanche, Lamennais—and among defenders of Christianity—Bonnetty, Eckstein, Lacordaire, Ozanam. Theorizing the succession of ages, the religious future, and the spiritual past enabled these men to rise above contemporary partis pris and envision a society bereft of republicans, legitimists, and parliamentary politicians, none of whom, Enfantin asserted, “govern minds any more than they govern politics.”⁴ Traditionalists tended to support the monarchies that governed throughout the period I am discussing; yet even they regarded history as the hopeful way out of a political environment they regarded with contempt. Excepting Ballanche,⁵ their historical thought is ill known compared to the socialists: I have found only half an article and some passages in a book referring to Bonnetty’s historical thought;⁶ no works analyzing Eckstein’s;⁷ and only one essay discussing that of Barbey d’Aurevilly,⁸ who as usual is the odd man out, reproducing contemporary themes only to undermine them, and insisting on the impossibility of manipulating the course of time. In this chapter I attempt to fill some of the lacunae in our knowledge of traditionalist speculative philosophies of history. I do so in the process of arguing that Maistre’s heirs across the political spectrum conceived of history as a moral vehicle that could be driven to defeat politics and help religion achieve its final social form.

The New Historical Morality: Saint-Simon

The fountainhead of multiple attempts to close the Revolution with knowledge,⁹ Saint-Simon’s philosophy of history mirrored Maistre’s, subversively but extensively. Its central thesis was that history is governed by a “law of alternativity” whereby periods of synthesis and analysis succeed each

4. Barthélémy Prosper Enfantin, *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse, 1843–1845* (Paris: Lacrampe fils et Cie, 1847), 204.

5. See McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*.

6. Neufeld, “La filosofia cristiana de Louis-Eugène Bautain (1796–1867) y Augustin Bonnetty (1798–1879)” and Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 113–15.

7. Neither Berthiot’s *Le baron d’Eckstein, journaliste et critique littéraire*, Burtin’s *Un sèmeur d’idées au temps de la restauration*, nor Schwab’s *Oriental Renaissance in the Pages Devoted to Eckstein* (259–75) attend systematically to his historical thought.

8. Glaudes, “Barbey d’Aurevilly antimoderne.”

9. Keith Baker, “Closing the French Revolution: Saint-Simon and Comte,” in *The Transformation of Political Culture 1789–1848*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, 3:323–39, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989).

other. During synthetic ages—which are “systems” analogous to biological organisms with a life cycle—society is relatively well integrated and peaceful, and the spiritual and temporal powers are in accord. Each system, however, is mortal, and its death begins when it is most fully alive—like Maistre’s nations, which start declining unstoppably at the very moment when they finally reach the apex of their parabolic trajectory. Yet where for Maistre the cause of decline is the exhaustion of the nation’s moral “force,” Saint-Simon’s systems perish because they contain critical elements that inaugurate new, “analytical” periods destructive of religion.

Structurally, Saint-Simon’s historical philosophy remained relatively unaltered across the years, but its contents changed with a frequency worthy of his schizophrenic personality. He “experimented haphazardly with a variety of other divisions, four, five, and nine, ultimately fixing on the number three, quite unconscious of the religious-mystic drive which had led him there.”¹⁰ Saint-Simon’s tripartite scheme is worth singling out among his many others because it was the one that he recommended to his followers at the end of his life. “*The whole doctrine is here*,”¹¹ he told Olinde Rodrigues on his deathbed, referring to *Le nouveau christianisme*, his “philosophical testament” and historically Trinitarian opus, as well as the book that reveals his traditionalist sympathies most clearly.

Saint-Simon’s morality is equivalent to an understanding of one’s place in history: “The momentous moral act [is] the perception of one’s right place in the historical process and the decision to follow its dictates. A man’s primary duty [is] . . . to understand the nature of the historical epoch into which he [is] born.”¹² Whether one injures one’s fellows in the process is a matter of inconsequence. Of course, no traditionalist would have ever endorsed historical contextualism to the detriment—indeed, Saint-Simon suggests, the abandonment—of personal moral duty. If morality and history are related for Maistre and Bonald, Saint-Simon’s preferred conservative, it is by individuals’ ability to exit history through virtuous action. Also, where for Saint-Simon being moral means engaging with the social conflicts that make history, for Maistre and Bonald it means minimizing conflict in order to transcend history. Traditionalists do not see historical perfection conveyed by a totalizing public society, but by the discrete societies, public and private, that form individuals and found all order. Their history, when admirable, does not

10. Manuel, Frank E., *The New World of Henri de Saint-Simon*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 153.

11. *Ibid.*, 363.

12. *Ibid.*, 148.

reform by making of “every man and woman a political animal, an inhabitant, willing or not, of history.”¹³ It is a quiet affair that regenerates, instead, by conveying moral truths and God’s word piecemeal to individuals.

The traditionalists and Saint-Simon both conceive of history as purgative conflict, and of moral action as submission. For the pope of industrialism, however, right submission is to the spirit of the age; while for the conservatives, it is to God and the good absolutely conceived, as well as to formative institutions—church, state, family. All agree that religion is the paramount institution. But how religion fashions men and women is another matter. Maistre and Bonald believe that history is deleted when religious submission is complete, whereas Saint-Simon thinks that, as the handmaiden of the greatest happiness of the largest social class, true religion facilitates the invasion of personal spaces by equalizing history.

Not that Saint-Simon’s morality is entirely reducible to historical adaptation and understanding. The fondness he displays for the Middle Ages, morally superior to a modernity that half repels him, involuntarily betrays the suprahistorical moral standards he shares with the traditionalists. *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (1814), cowritten with Thierry, anticipates *Du pape* by identifying the “Roman clergy” of medieval times as Europe’s moral and political cement: “Dispersed everywhere, and everywhere depending only on itself, compatriot of all peoples, and having its government and its laws, [the clergy] was the center out of which emanated the will that animated that great body and the impulsion that made it act.”¹⁴ *De la réorganisation* also echoes the *Considérations sur la France* by theorizing Catholicism as a historical tranquilizer inimical to crisis, by arguing that Protestantism introduced the chaos that culminated in the French Revolution, and by urging that the business of the moment is to bring Europe back to a state of order comparable to, or exceeding that of, the Middle Ages. *De la réorganisation* further foreshadows *Du pape* by recommending the creation of a European federation that will settle disputes between nations and coordinate commercial and political relations. A king rather than a clergy will head it, though: in 1814, Saint-Simon placed greater faith in temporal sovereigns than he would in the 1820s, after *Du pape*’s publication. Another important difference between *De la réorganisation* and *Du pape* is the means they recommend to quell political violence. A firm opponent of imperialism,¹⁵ Maistre envisioned Europe’s diverse sovereignties

13. George Steiner, “Darkness Visible,” *London Review of Books*, November 24, 1988.

14. Saint-Simon and Thierry, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, xi.

15. Maistre, *Du pape*, 175.

developing progressively and ecumenically within the bounds of divine reason; while Saint-Simon and Thierry argued that Revolution had to be exhausted, and quiescence guaranteed at home, through European conquest abroad.¹⁶

Having become convinced that modernity was a spiritual crisis, and that the Catholic Church was partly responsible for it, Saint-Simon wrote the history of Europe in *Le nouveau christianisme* (1825) as a function of the development of ecclesiastical power. His project was astonishingly similar to *Du pape's* in structure but radically different in content. Until the fifteenth century, Saint-Simon argued, the church had been faithful to Christ's commandment "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). The whole Gospel was reducible to this saying, by which Jesus meant that spiritual and temporal authorities should never mingle, because temporal authority rules by force, and the only justice it knows is the strength of the strongest; whereas spiritual authority governs according to moral law and in the interests of the lowly. Until the fifteenth century, "the temporal power continued to found its power on the law of the strongest, while the church professed that society could only recognize as legitimate those institutions having as their object the amelioration of the existence of the poorest class."¹⁷

Leo X made the Catholic Church heretical. Before he became pope, the clergy had been orthodox. "It had been superior to laymen in all sciences whose progress has contributed to the increase of the well-being of the poorest class; since then, it has become heretical, because it has only cultivated theology, and has allowed itself to be surpassed by laymen in the arts, in the exact sciences, and in regard to industrial capacity."¹⁸ Paradoxically, in abandoning worldly knowledge, the church became the instrument of temporal power. Before Leo, the popes were obscure individuals named "by all the faithful, and the sole motive that determined their nomination was that they were regarded as the most zealous for the good of the poor."¹⁹ After Leo, they were drawn exclusively from the upper classes. Riches, not talent, began to ensure access to the aristocracy. Meanwhile, "the spiritual power ceased to struggle against the temporal

16. Saint-Simon and Thierry, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, 60.

17. Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon, *Le nouveau christianisme et les écrits sur la religion*, ed. Henri Desroches (1825; repr., Paris: Seuil, 1969), 114.

18. *Ibid.*, 127.

19. *Ibid.*, 137–38.

power”²⁰ and lost its legitimacy, telling princes: “We will declare you kings by the grace of God.”²¹

Luther’s criticisms of Catholicism were justified; but his constructive program was also heretical. The Reformer misguidedly believed “that morality had to be taught to the faithful of his time in the same way that it had been [taught] by the fathers of the church to their contemporaries,” and that “the cult had to be stripped of all the charms with which the arts can enrich it.”²² Luther, in short, failed to see that history was the site of salvation. As the church forsook worldly knowledge and the Reformation triumphed, epistemological paradigms shifted. From Christianity’s beginnings until the fifteenth century, the church had submitted particular interests to the general interest, deserting, in epistemology, particular facts and secondary principles. But after the fifteenth century, the tables turned: “The human intellect detached itself from the most general views: it delivered itself to specialties, it occupied itself with the analysis of particular facts, of the private interests of the different classes of society.”²³ The prejudice subsequently grew that considering general facts and principles was a vague and metaphysical exercise irrelevant to the advance of enlightenment and civilization. Selecting the best from medieval and modern perspectives, Saint-Simon intended his new Christianity to synthesize generalist and particularist epistemologies in the service of the poor.

Like Lamennais in the next decade, Saint-Simon reworked *Du pape’s* fictional letter of the Swedish people to the pope. Foreshadowing his followers’ interpretive practices, though, he borrowed from Maistre to destabilize him. His mock letter to Leo XII appeals to him to act—but to reform the church and destroy kings:

Very holy father, the human race is experiencing at this moment a great intellectual crisis; three new capacities are showing themselves: the arts reappear, the sciences are overlaying all the other branches of our knowledge, and the great industrial combinations tend more directly to the amelioration of the fate of the poorest class than any of the measures taken until now by the temporal power as well as the spiritual power. These three capacities are peaceful in character; it is consequently in your interest, and in the interest of the clergy, to combine

20. Ibid., 135.

21. Ibid., 136.

22. Ibid., 143.

23. Ibid., 183–84.

with them. . . . By this means, the power of Caesar, which is impious in its origins and in its pretensions, . . . will be completely annihilated.²⁴

Far from dwelling only in wishful ultramontanist landscapes, the idea of papal primacy bobbed up across ideological streams, and even more vigorously than in Maistre's own thought. For Saint-Simon's pope does not simply dispose of Caesar in times of crisis. He actually removes Caesar, never to replace him. Moreover, he does so not by administering temporal matters as in *Du pape*, but by dismissing politics to transform epistemology. Leo should place "the sciences of observation and industry at the head of sacred knowledge," "[pronounce] anathema on theology, and [classify] as impious all doctrines aiming to teach men other means of obtaining eternal life than that of working to their full capacity for the amelioration of the existence of their fellow human beings."²⁵ Henceforth, cult and dogma should submit to morality. Christianity's continuing role is key, but only for practical reasons: "The intellectual forces of man are very small," and "it is in making them converge on a single goal that it is possible to produce a great effect and obtain an important result."²⁶ Christian submission will also continue to the end:

The new Christianity, like primitive Christianity, will be supported, pushed, protected, by the moral force and the all-power of public opinion; and if by misfortune its admission occasions violent acts, unjust condemnations, it will be the new Christians who will endure the violent acts, the unjust condemnations; but in no case will one see them employ physical force against their adversaries; in no case will they figure as judges or executioners.²⁷

It is a peaceful revolution reminiscent of Maistre's Counter-Revolution, that utter contrary of Revolution that will be "angelic" or not be at all,²⁸ patiently biding its time until Providence plucks humanity out of time.

Maistre, the Prophet of Socialism

Where Saint-Simon referred to the synthetic and analytical ages of history, the Saint-Simonians wrote of the organic and critical ones; but the

24. Ibid., 155–56.

25. Ibid., 165.

26. Ibid., 176.

27. Ibid., 180.

28. For a discussion of Maistre's concept of Counter-Revolution, see Compagnon, *Les antimodernes*, 28–29.

two categories were identical in everything but name. Organic–synthetic ages presided over social unity under religion. Critical–analytical ones were marked by the empire of reason and disunity, and were divided into two further phases: a first phase that subverted the old moral order, and a second when egoism prevailed.

Like their master’s histories, the Saint-Simonians’ various histories (for, like Saint-Simon, they composed several) wavered between tranquillity and calamity and emancipated humanity indefinitely. The most widely known version put forward two organic and two critical ages. Antiquity was organic until philosophy appeared and overthrew pagan dogma. Christianity contributed to the resulting turmoil until it was itself established in the Middle Ages and gave birth to all the arts and sciences—as it had done in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*. The Reformation then began the modern crisis that led to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the wars and conflicts of the nineteenth century. But the crisis would end with a new, organic age that would do away with party politics and class interests.²⁹

Responding to the senator’s question, in the seventh dialogue of *Les soirées*, of how it was possible that nations, and especially “reasoning Europe,” had been incapable of “elevating themselves to the social state like individuals,”³⁰ the Saint-Simonian Eugène Rodrigues elaborated a tripartite historical theory whereby “Mosaism” was the “religion and society of a nation,” Christianity established a “society of individuals,” and Saint-Simonianism, the “religion of the future,” would bring to pass the “society of nations.” Although Rodrigues, like Maistre—and unlike Enfantin—envisioned an angelic humanity arising at the end of time, he inverted Maistre’s eschatology like a glove: “Science would be dogma,” and “the Vatican, decrepit as it [was], [would] hold on as long as the foundation of a new Vatican [had] not been established.”³¹ In this way, the dogmatization of science inherent to the thought of Saint-Simon and his heirs annulled Maistre’s warnings against science and his insistence that it should be subordinate to dogma, all the while enshrining his sacralization of the fact.

Enfantin’s executors also used Maistre’s historical thought to envision a future wildly different from his. Saint-Simonianism in the 1860s might look like a failed faith, they wrote, but Maistre’s description of “the vanity[,]

29. See Picon, *Les saint-simoniens*, 60–63.

30. Quoted in Eugène Rodrigues, *Lettres d’Eugène Rodrigues sur la religion et la politique* (Paris: Bureau du Globe, 1832), 170–71.

31. Glaudes, “Saint-Simonisme,” 1284.

of the outrages, and of the spite that surround a nascent religion”³² lent it special hope. Indeed, the “illustrious papist” had predicted the advent of Saint-Simonianism itself: “*Considering the general weakening of moral principles, the shaking of sovereignties, the immensity of social needs, and the inanity of means, every true philosopher should opt between one of these two hypotheses, that either a new religion would form, or that Christianity would be rejuvenated in an extraordinary manner.*”³³

Bazard, for his part, believed that, in the eleventh dialogue of *Les soirées*, the senator had prophesied not Saint-Simonianism, but Saint-Simon himself, the “man of genius” who united religion and science in *Les soirées*:

Let us ready ourselves, as DE MAISTRE says, for an immense event in the divine order, toward which we march with an accelerated speed that must strike all observers, let us tell ourselves like him: there is no longer any religion on earth, the human race cannot remain in this state; but, happier than DE MAISTRE, we no longer wait for *the man of genius* he prophesied, and who, according to him, had to reveal soon the natural affinity of religion and science: SAINT-SIMON appeared.³⁴

Other socialists also looked hopefully to Maistre’s prediction of a new unity under religion’s aegis. In an adoring passage, the Fourierist Catholic Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant ([Maître Petit Jean], b. 1809?, fl. 1848–80) pondered *Les soirées*’ prediction of a “third explosion of all-powerful goodness,” comparing Maistre to a historical eagle with panoramic vision:

Splendid words, where all of Socialism is summarized. . . . Joyful words: for, to those who know how to listen, that other divine explosion, that new illumination of the evangelical Word, is going to end the resistance of the Jews, the separation of the schismatics, the indifference of the philosophers, the dispersion of peoples, and the world will contemplate soon that sweet and magnificent spectacle of the free cooperation of humanity around a unique Pastor.³⁵

Writing to the comtesse de Senfft in 1834, a few months after the publication of the *Paroles d’un croyant*, Lamennais also praised Maistre for foretelling

32. Barthélémy-François Arlès-Dufour et al., “Notice historique,” in Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon and Prosper Barthélémy Enfantin, *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d’Enfantin* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865–69), 1:36.

33. Ibid., 1:40–41.

34. Saint-Amand Bazard, *Doctrine de Saint-Simon, Exposition, Première année, 1829*, ed. C. Bouglé and E. Halévy (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1924), 417–19.

35. Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant, “Un aigle socialiste,” in *Joseph de Maistre*, 747.

a kinder future. His was a prophecy, the Catholic socialist thought, especially admirable on the part of a thinker obsessed with punishment and suffering, who seemed to be always writing “on a scaffold”: “That man, so dry and so hard as a thinker, could not defend himself from a magnificent premonition; a reflection of I do not know what resplendent future, impenetrable to his warned reason, had more than once shone on the blade that he brandished constantly over the human race.”³⁶

Maistre, the Socialists’ Historian

It was above all the “third revelation,” the religious utopia at the end of time, that fired the Maistrian zeal of French socialists. The idea that “time is something forced that asks only to finish,”³⁷ that France was called to exercise a spiritual magistracy over the world, that humanity was advancing speedily toward a mysterious unity—all these themes interspersed the socialist prophecy of the 1830s and 1840s.³⁸ Despite their brief collective existence and their fragmentary posterity, the Saint-Simonians were its most fervent propagators.

Erasing all distinctions, Enfantin’s historiography resembled his paradoxical, desacralizing religion. Historians, he argued, should write about all the classes of all the nations dispersed throughout the world rather than tell only the story of powerful Christian Europeans. It was a way of extending to the planet the famous plea that Augustin Thierry made in the *Courrier français* of 1820 for a new history of the people that would replace former histories of elites. In addition, Enfantin continued, expanding history’s geographical scope would gain followers for Saint-Simonianism because the world’s nations had been readying for centuries to welcome the new faith.³⁹ In the end, Saint-Simonian historiography would usher in history’s final age, when Orient and Occident would embrace each other, and “the ardent FLESH that walks on the ground of the *South*” would “COMMUNE” with “the SPIRIT that rises in the clouds of the *North*.”⁴⁰ With the earth thus renewed, social individuals—male–female couples—would complete

36. Félicité Robert de Lamennais, Letter to the comtesse de Senfft, October 8, 1834, in *Joseph de Maistre*, 569.

37. Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, 764.

38. Glaudes, “Saint-Simonisme,” 1284.

39. Enfantin, “2è enseignement: L’histoire,” in *Réunion générale de la famille: Enseignements du Père Suprême*, 106.

40. Ibid.

the alliance of mind and heart with God,⁴¹ and establish a world without differences.

Although scholarly descriptions of the Saint-Simonian philosophy of history have focused exclusively on models of organic and critical ages, Enfantin was persuaded that dividing history into succeeding phases was secondary, “cold, glacial, like the dualism of LIFE and DEATH, RELIGION and ATHEISM,”⁴² and dismissed Saint-Simon’s law of alternativity. In the future, he wrote, everything would be associative: there would be no more divisions, no more antagonisms and exploitations, but only fusion between flesh and spirit, Orient and Occident, woman and man. The demise of dualism would be accompanied by the development of the “*Trinitarian dogma*” that Saint-Simon had “regularly developed,”⁴³ along with traditionalists and illuminists,⁴⁴ until history stopped.

As we have seen, Saint-Simon had commented on Matthew’s verse regarding the spiritual and temporal powers, but Enfantin preferred to study Maistre’s approach to the subject, observing that the Savoyard had grasped perfectly its nature and consequences. “Nobody is ignorant of the fact,” he wrote, “that these two simple phrases—‘Give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s’⁴⁵; and ‘My kingdom is not of this world’⁴⁶—have been, for eighteen centuries, the bases of Christian politics, that is, of the action of the two powers, spiritual and temporal, that have divided up the world among themselves.”⁴⁷ Other than Saint-Simonianism, which sought to absorb the temporal into the spiritual, ultramontanism was the only way of being true to Matthew’s meaning without subordinating the spiritual to the temporal. For this reason, Enfantin deemed that Maistre and Lamennais were “the brightest religious *politicians* of this beginning of the nineteenth century.”⁴⁸

41. Ibid., 97.

42. Ibid., 107.

43. Ibid., 111.

44. On Bonald’s trinitarianism, see Gengembre, *La contre-révolution*, 175–76. On Maistre’s, see this volume, 000; on Lamennais’, see 000. Patrick Tacussel and Serge Zenkine believe that Saint-Simonian trinitarianism derived from Hermeticism, but its pervasion of contemporary illuminist writings and its strong presence in *Les soirées*, one of the Saint-Simoniens’ canonical texts, makes these more proximal and likely sources. See Zenkine, “L’utopie religieuse des saint-simoniens,” 43–44, and Tacussel, “Physiologie sociale et hermétisme: Le retour du dieu androgyne,” in *Mythologie des formes sociales: Balzac et les saint-simoniens ou le Destin de la modernité* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1995), 217–26.

45. Matthew 22:21.

46. John 18:36.

47. Enfantin, *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse*, 206.

48. Ibid., 176.

Enfantin wrote to *Le courrier français* of February 8, 1844, to vindicate Maistre's exegesis of John's verse. The Greek original, Maistre argued in *De l'église gallicane*, had read "My kingdom is not *now* of this world," but this meaning was lost for modern French readers. This was because the word "now" was missing from eighteenth-century French translations of the New Testament. As Maistre explained:

I do not know why certain translators . . . have taken the liberty of deleting this word *now*, which is nonetheless read in the text as in the Vulgate. I am not ignorant of the fact that the particle *Νῦν* can sometimes have only a purely argumentative value, which then renders it more or less the synonym of *but* or of *or*; here, however, it can very well be taken literally; and it is not permitted to suppress it. How do we know that the Savior did not wish, by that mysterious monosyllable, to express certain things that men did not have to know yet? There is more: what did our divine Master mean when he declared at once *that he was the king of the Jews, and that his kingdom was not of this world*? The first sign of respect that we owe to these venerable enigmas, is to draw no conclusions that our ignorance could render dangerous.⁴⁹

In its issue of December 22, 1843, the liberal journal *Le courrier* took Maistre's side against the philological arguments of one Baillès,⁵⁰ who favored the suppression of "now" (in accordance with standard translations to this day). But when *Le globe* retorted by rallying behind Baillès, Enfantin wrote to *Le courrier* to defend Maistre's position, which he considered to be a genuine revelation. He was not the first socialist to hold this opinion. In 1835, the Buchezians had also vindicated Maistre's take on John, arguing in their journal *L'atelier* that the announcement of God's earthly kingdom obliterated in New Testament translations was actually the coming of their General Association;⁵¹ while in 1838, Lamennais too had emulated the Savoyard, recommending the insertion of "now."⁵²

Enfantin agreed with Maistre that the entire future of the human race hinged on whether "now" was omitted or included. The apostle might have wished to convey things still incomprehensible to men at the time—so that the time after "now" might allude to the "*new humanity* to which we

49. OC, 3:112.

50. Possibly Jacques-Marie-Joseph Baillès, bishop of Luçon (served 1845–56).

51. François-André Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l'homme chez Philippe Buchez (1796–1865)* (Paris: Cujas, 1967), 161.

52. Plongerón, "Le christianisme comme messianisme social," 848.

belong.”⁵³ But, Enfantin exclaimed: “Will I be taken for a copyist of Bel-larmine or of de Maistre? God preserve me!” John 18:36 had different messages for different times, but these messages no longer applied to specific historical conditions. Figuristic reasoning was obsolete, and it was no longer a matter of knowing

today, in the nineteenth century, *now*, . . . as in the time of Jesus, whether Jesus wants to dethrone Caesar and whether he calls himself the King of the world; one must no longer see, as in the time of Charlemagne, in the Pope and in the Emperor . . . the two militant halves of a world at war; finally, the question is no longer, as in the time of Louis XIV and Bossuet, to know whether the Church must dominate the State, or the State the Church; it is a matter of being conscious finally that God is incarnated in us, imperfect but progressive beings, in US ALL, and to feel him, *now*, in the State as in the Church, in Kings and in peoples as in the Pope and in priests, on earth as in heaven; it is a matter of finally realizing peacefully the unity of the human family, revealed by Jesus, taught by the Church, prepared by the world. . . . To accomplish such a task, down with the theologians who say: “We are alone members of the body of Christ. . . .” Down with the politicians who say: “Let Christ stay in his sanctuary; he is not of this world!” For those theologians and those politicians do not feel that the Man-God⁵⁴ still bears his cross, and that he suffers, drinking venom, devastated by misery, in the entrails of peoples, in those of Kings, and even more perhaps in those of priests.⁵⁵

Twelve years after the end of his mission as “Le Père,” Enfantin still advocated the democratization of sacredness, as he had done when following Ballanche in the late 1820s and early 1830s; he still argued, with the Counter-Enlightenment, that the divine has concrete, worldly manifestations; and he still continued to believe that historical progress attenuates dualisms. But he had ceased to be interested in history, and to harbor a great “*religious hope*” for the future.⁵⁶ He was perhaps aware that, in destroying religion, his own religion had made salvation by history impossible. And so he now placed

53. Enfantin, *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse*, 213.

54. This allusion to Christ as “the Man-God” incarnated in us all was a Martinist one that Maistre picked up in the third, fourth, and tenth dialogues of *Les soirées*.

55. Enfantin, *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse*, 216–17.

56. *Ibid.*, 57.

his faith in the noiseless reform of individuals by existing institutions. In doing this, he drew closer to the traditionalists. The dream of a revolutionary church that could abolish history in the manner of *Du pape* had been his youthful ambition; but by the 1840s, he was preaching the end of history through escape from history, that is, through the organic and imperceptible transformation of society, individual by individual. The early Maistre could not have agreed more: *Crescit occulto velut arbor aevo*.

Philippe Buchez, the Catholic Socialist

Philippe Buchez (1796–1865) was a socialist autodidact whose intellectual and religious journey led him to formulate a philosophy of history of Maistrian derivation. In 1825, he read *Le nouveau christianisme* and converted to Saint-Simonianism, becoming an associate of Bazard. But he left the movement in 1830 in protest against Enfantin's pantheism.⁵⁷ Henceforth, he leaned on Saint-Martin, Maistre, and Comte and Saint-Simon to develop a quasi-Manichean, Catholic historical philosophy that contrasted starkly with Enfantin's fusionism.⁵⁸ Just as Saint-Simon compared organic historical periods to biological systems, and just as Comte declared that sociology, the final science, stemmed from biology, Buchez designated history as a "total science" akin to social physiology.⁵⁹ His *Introduction à la science de l'histoire* (1833) set out "to find in the study of historical facts the law of the generation of social phenomena, in order to predict the political future of the human race and to enlighten the present with the torch of future destinies."⁶⁰

Historically, Buchez argued, liberation was Christianity's accomplishment. Echoing *Du pape* and the *Palingénésie philosophique*, the *Évangile pour les ouvriers* (1837) that he cowrote with Prosper-Charles Roux (dates unknown) stated that Christ gave men spiritual liberty along with the possibility of political and material liberty.⁶¹ Baptism "has liberated children, the sacrament of marriage has liberated women, partaking in all the sacraments has liberated

57. Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l'homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 148. "Pantheism," however, was a contested term among the Saint-Simonians, who, as Zenkine points out, denounced it for its skeptical and fatalistic tendencies. See Zenkine, "L'utopie religieuse des saint-simoniens," 38–39.

58. Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l'homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 151.

59. *Ibid.*, 249.

60. Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez, *Introduction à la science de l'histoire; ou, Science du développement de l'humanité* (Paris: Paulin, 1833), 1.

61. Plongeron, "Le christianisme comme messianisme social," 844.

the slave.”⁶² As in *Du pape*, France has a special mission; but according to Buchez it is to spread Christian liberty: “Even by its name, France shows that it is predestined to the *liberating* mission. Its emblem is the immense awakening of which she is the instrument among all humanity, proving enough that she is really the evangelical rooster.”⁶³ In the “political future,” the most numerous class will be happy as Saint-Simon had hoped; while the spiritual power, represented by a (rather Comtian) papacy reduced to its spiritual functions, will harmonize with a temporal power modeled on Maistre’s pontificate.⁶⁴ In keeping with a trend started by *Du pape*, though, the idea of equilibrated spiritual and temporal powers faded from Buchez’s thought in later years, to be replaced with a depiction of spiritual dominance over the temporal reminiscent of *Le nouveau christianisme*, of Gerbet’s *Conférences de philosophie catholique*, of the philosophy of Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonians, and of Comte’s *Système de politique positive*.

Like Maistre, Buchez sees history as the site of a moral and epistemological renewal willed by humans⁶⁵ and ordained by Providence. A child of illuminism, he recognizes, like his friend Lamennais and like Maistre, that progress pertains not only to humans but to the whole universe.⁶⁶ A radical immanentist, he also believes that the religious and scientific points of view are equivalent, that God’s activity and the laws of nature are analogous, and that in directing history, Providence obeys reason. God, says Buchez, using Ballanchian language, is the “supreme initiator.”⁶⁷ Scientific systems and religious dogma alike are his given knowledge and constitute acts of revelation⁶⁸—as Maistre argued in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, which Buchez may have read when it appeared in 1836. But Buchez maintains what Maistre would have found outrageous: that the French Revolution had contributed to developing Christian liberty and equality,⁶⁹ and that Christianity

62. Quoted *ibid.* No reference is provided for this quotation in Plongeron’s article. I have also been unable to find an extant copy of the *Évangile pour les ouvriers*.

63. Quoted *ibid.*, 855. No reference is provided in Plongeron’s article for this citation of Buchez, nor is the source text indicated.

64. Barbara Patricia Petri, *The Historical Thought of Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 113–14.

65. Eugenio Guccione, *Philippe Buchez e la rivoluzione francese: Pensiero politico e storiografia* (Palermo: Mazzone, 1993), and Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l’homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 269.

66. Petri, *Historical Thought of Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez*, 33.

67. Quoted in Michael Reardon, “The Reconciliation of Christianity with Progress: Philippe Buchez,” *Review of Politics* 23, 4 (1971): 534.

68. Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l’homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 181, 280.

69. Glaudes, “Saint-Simonisme,” 1284.

itself was but a “continual revolution.”⁷⁰ Buchez observed resentfully that, in rejecting the Revolution, the French people saw neither the concordance between church and Revolution,⁷¹ nor the Revolution’s regenerative work.⁷² So tenaciously, in fact, did Buchez believe in the complicity between Christianity and revolt that in 1831, a few months before the abbé Henri Grégoire (1750–1831) died, Buchez paid him a surprise visit to convince him to rehabilitate Robespierre and the Terror. The strategy failed: indignant, the frail old man threw him out into the street. But the persistent Buchez wrote an *Histoire parlementaire de la révolution française; ou, Journal des assemblées nationales depuis 1789 jusqu’en 1815* (1834–38), a work that tarnished his reputation by justifying revolutionary violence.

Buchez’s Providential history, vaguely reminiscent of Eugène Rodrigues’s, is divided into four periods—Adam’s age, Noah’s age, Abraham’s age, and the Christian age. Each of these is in turn subdivided into three movements of desire, reason, and execution. Periods of desire are those of social foundation under religion’s auspices, while periods of reason are characterized by analysis and the rise of science. Times of execution preside over the harmony of religion and civil society and prepare new ages. Buchez believed that he was living at the end of the second period of the Christian epoch, a time destined to prepare the reign of the General Association. This reign, in turn, would be the time of faith’s rebirth, when Christian fraternity would end workers’ exploitation.

Afterward, during the final age, “[a] day will come at last when humanity will have accomplished its task. Then, another world will appear and the will of God will be done.” In this ultimate future, as in that of *Les soirées*, humanity will surpass itself and perhaps exceed Christianity. But that is all that is manifest. Unknown and unknowable, the last days lend to individual and collective progress what socialists of the 1820s and 1830s found invaluable about *Les soirées*: “a background of immensity.”⁷³

Proudhon’s Historical Thought

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon admired Maistre. He read *Les soirées*, the *Considérations sur la France*, and *Du pape* around 1829; reread them in 1839–40; and

70. Plongeron, “Le christianisme comme messianisme social,” 894.

71. Guccione, *Philippe Buchez e la rivoluzione francese*, 68.

72. Reardon, “Reconciliation of Christianity with Progress,” 522.

73. Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l’homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 182–83.

read them all again in 1844.⁷⁴ He cited these works approximately forty times in his publications⁷⁵ and took notes on them with nearly unfailing approbation. An entry in his Cahier VI of 1844 reads: “De Maistre. *Du pape*. Curious book, full of verve, intelligence, and malice; perfectly reasoned; the veritable code of the partisans of the principle of *Authority*. Here, De Maistre shows himself to be a man of genius.”⁷⁶

Proudhon was especially fond of Maistre’s theory of revolution: “The French Revolution is Satanic in essence,” said Maistre. “It will never be completely extinguished by the contrary principle.” “That principle is Theocracy. Nobility and clergy,” went on Proudhon, “delighted” to agree with Maistre completely.⁷⁷ Proudhon likewise thought that the “universal and temporal sovereignty of the Pope” that Maistre depicted was “the most justifiable of all sovereignties.”⁷⁸ And he agreed with the Savoyard that the Declaration of 1682 was “one of the most solemnly reckless acts that have ever been committed in the world.” Famously, Proudhon enthused on Maistre’s idea of war:

There exists in war . . . a moral element, which makes of it the most splendid and at the same time the most horrible manifestation of our species . . .

So speaks de Maistre, the great theosophist, a thousand times more profound in his theosophy than the so-called rationalists whom his words scandalize. De Maistre is the first who, making of war a sort of manifestation of the will of Heaven, and precisely because he confesses that he understands nothing of it, has shown that he understood something.⁷⁹

“Here is a worthy and laudable representative of a system,” Proudhon concludes in his Cahier VI, “a man like de Maistre must be immortal, like Spinoza, Leibniz, and Descartes. To have understood the meaning of ideas so well belongs to a rare intelligence.”⁸⁰

74. Steven K. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 24.

75. *Ibid.*, 230n.

76. Quoted by Pierre Haubtmann, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: Génèse d'un antithéiste* (Mame, 1969), 130.

77. Quoted *ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*, 131.

79. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “La guerre et la paix,” in *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, ed. Roger Picard (Paris: Rivière, 1927), 7:30–31.

80. Haubtmann, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, 131.

Proudhon's attitudes toward history are paradoxical and ambiguous on several levels. On the face of it, he flatly rejects contemporary philosophies of history: "During these last years, people have occupied themselves much with knowing what were the laws of historical development; they have wanted, so to speak, to guess Providence's supreme formula. It is now easy to understand to what point they deceived themselves. History is the general picture of the development of all the sciences . . . , there are no universal historical laws, because there is no universal science."⁸¹ Correlating history's content and its form, the argument is a non sequitur: history does not proceed according to any patterns because these cannot be understood systematically. It is also antiprogressive: "Progress, the general mode of divine operation and political evolution, cannot serve to formulate either the history of a century or the totality of history."⁸²

Yet, in spite of all his declamations, Proudhon has not only a philosophy of history but also one that is consistent with traditionalism. Scholars, though, must delve to find it. In the *Contradictions politiques: Théorie du mouvement constitutionnel au XIXe siècle* (written 1863–64), Proudhon replaces the historical seriation of constitutions with a rational seriation comprising all possible constitutions from autocracy to democracy. He posits a "constitutional cycle, in which every society is called to move, until its definitive organization. This cycle results from the preponderance successively accorded to each of the social elements: one finds it more or less marked in the history of all peoples."⁸³ The cycle is at once progressive and nonprogressive: "One can say that, in the historical succession of our constitutions, there is a sort of progress. But once society has found its equilibrium and lives its normal life, the constitution no longer changes, and from that point of view one can no longer say that there is progress. The perpetuity of movement excludes such a notion."⁸⁴

Proudhon's idea of progress is complex. On the one hand, he dismisses progress explicitly in the conventional historical sense. Constitutions, for instance, do not develop one out of the other through time to yield better

81. Proudhon, "De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité; ou, Principes d'organisation politique," *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, 6:358–59.

82. *Ibid.*, 6:359.

83. Proudhon, *Théorie du mouvement constitutionnel au XIXe siècle: contradictions politiques* (Paris: Librairie internationale, 1870), 80. On the historical theory that Proudhon exposes in this text, see Patrice Rolland, "Proudhon et les leçons de l'histoire constitutionnelle française," in *L'histoire institutionnelle et juridique dans la pensée politique*, Actes du XVIIe colloque de l'Association française des historiens des idées politiques, Collection d'Histoire des idées politiques (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2006).

84. Proudhon, *Théorie du mouvement constitutionnel*, 130.

and better forms: “1789 has not liberated us but only changed the variety of our misery.”⁸⁵ On the other hand, constitutional cycles are indirectly progressive insofar as they end up deploying through time all the different aspects that a constitution can assume, thus providing the elements needed for the construction of the final, balanced constitution.

The history of revolutions illustrates this process. Viewing history as arising out of antinomies, Proudhon maintains that, “as the instinct of reaction is inherent to every social institution, the need for revolution is equally irresistible; that every political party, whatever it may be, can become in turn, following circumstance, revolutionary expression and reactionary expression.”⁸⁶ The West has experienced three revolutions: the first was called the Gospel, the second, which burst out in the sixteenth century, was called philosophy, and the third, which began in the eighteenth century, was called the social contract.⁸⁷ None of them were emancipating: “Are we not witnesses, we the generation of 1848, to a corruption worse than that of the worst days of history; to a misery similar to that of feudal times; to an oppression of mind and conscience; to an exhaustion of all the faculties of man, which surpass everything we have seen during the times of the most hideous barbarity?”⁸⁸

Despair seems unending, but redemption is around the corner. For despite suggesting that his thought is like no one else’s, Proudhon, too, dreams of ending history harmoniously—if only immense obstacles can be overcome. He believes that the revolution of his time is economic: “Like all its predecessors, it is nothing less than . . . a sort of overthrow of the established order that it brings. Without that complete turnaround of principles and beliefs, there is no revolution, there is only mystification.”⁸⁹ Herein is the glimmer of hope: that the turnaround is conceived, a salvific move that can reverse previous failures. Eventually, it depends on human reason, specifically science and the capacity for computation, whose exercise will usher in a “definitive organization” characterized by the balancing of all previous contradictions: “Political science is not the science of society, but . . . it contains the materials of that science, in the same way that the chaos before creation contained the elements of the universe; . . . to arrive at the definitive organization that

85. Proudhon, “Idée générale de la révolution au XIX^e siècle,” *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, 3:153.

86. *Ibid.*, 3:100.

87. Proudhon, “Toast à la Révolution,” *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, 8:399–400.

88. *Ibid.*, 8:401.

89. *Ibid.*, 8:402.

seems to be the destiny of our species on the globe, there only remains to make a general equation of all our contradictions.”⁹⁰

The “normal life of the collective being”⁹¹—the vocabulary is Comtean—will ensue from the peaceful, permanent revolution Proudhon awaits. Familiar ideas resurface: a “sort of progress” deriving from the production of the knowledge necessary to craft the new science of society that will devise history’s final harmony, or at least its final normality. It sounds like Comte, Saint-Simon, the *ideologues*—with the apparent difference that the final science, despite devising a final solution to humanity’s problem, will not be universal (since universal science itself is not possible). In fact, although keenly interested in Comte’s sociological project, Proudhon is vehemently critical of it:⁹² no one, to his mind, has yet come close to developing the science that will arrest time’s progress, dissolving history into a peaceful revolution with no end.

Proudhon’s vision, which rejects Christian grace to embrace the belief that man alone crafts his own destiny, would have been far too anthropocentric for Maistre, who sees Providence as the coachman of history. But some of the vision’s crucial moments recall the Maistrian philosophy of history. Proudhon believes, first, that revolution evolves out of conservation and vice versa—a dualism that, despite his denunciation of the “historical laws” he blamed his contemporaries for seeking, evokes Maistre’s and Saint-Simon’s idea of alternating ages. Second, and more generally, Proudhon models history, like Maistre, as emerging out of antinomies. Third—and this is perhaps traditionalism’s greatest legacy to thinkers across the political spectrum—Proudhon posits the moral and the social as invariably prior to the political. For Proudhon as for the senator of *Les soirées*, the end of time has no political identity. It is simply an order that is not bought with blood.

Comtian and Aurevillian Historical Thought

If Proudhon had no faith in historical laws, Auguste Comte, who created the most systematic and explanatory speculative philosophy of history of the French nineteenth century, could probably have named no conceptual entities that he thought more real. Volume 3 of the *Système de politique positive* (1853) is devoted to “social dynamics,” his term for history, which, he ex-

90. Ibid., 8:410.

91. Proudhon, *Théorie du mouvement constitutionnel*, 103.

92. On the Comte-Proudhon relationship, see Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:85–91.

plains, “is essentially equivalent to sociology.”⁹³ The “development of humanity” itself arises from the dual effect of “intelligence” and “activity,” where “speculation is always directed essentially by action.”⁹⁴ History culminates in “the ascendancy of affection over action and the subordination of theory to practice.”⁹⁵ The end of history will hence revive fetishism, the first stage of history that “presided . . . over the universal culture of sentiment.”⁹⁶

Comte organized history’s stages according to the religious system prevailing in each: fetishism, conservative polytheism, intellectual polytheism, social polytheism, defensive monotheism, and the Occidental revolution. He believed that, like the human race, he himself progressed intellectually toward positivism. The historical stages he described in the *Système de politique positive* toward the end of his life were therefore more positive—in the sense of more specific—elaborations of the historical phases he had first described in 1821 in the more familiar Law of the Three Stages. According to this law, human history had begun when theology and the military governed, and when astronomy and mathematics, the most general sciences, dominated knowledge. This first stage was followed by a metaphysical-judicial one that began in the fourteenth century with liberty of discussion and examination. Characterized by the epistemological reign of philosophy and the rise to power of lawyers, it culminated in the French Revolution.⁹⁷ Physics and chemistry were its paradigmatic sciences. The Revolution, in turn, commenced the “great crisis,” a transitional period that would conclude with the establishment of industrial positivism, when sociology (or, in Comte’s late thought, morality) would rule knowledge, and *industriels* and scientists—or, in Comte’s late philosophy, priests—would regulate society. As the final organic age, positivism would be the most scientific, the most socially harmonious, and the most pious of ages—since with time “man becomes more and more religious.”⁹⁸

Positivism would also be the most artistic of times. Comte arranged the arts in a hierarchy like the sciences, but inverting his criterion of value. Whereas he valued morality and sociology, the most empirical sciences, the most, he valued poetry, the most general art, the most, so he ordered poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture in descending order of worth and generality.⁹⁹ Poetry was particularly important because it possessed

93. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 3:3.

94. *Ibid.*, 3:13.

95. *Ibid.*, 3:502.

96. *Ibid.*, 3:501.

97. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:299–300.

98. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 3:10.

99. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:396.

unmatched moral and spiritual powers. These could be harnessed for positivism once a positivist poet¹⁰⁰ was found who could write the prayers of the Religion of Humanity, “works of art”¹⁰¹ expressing the “poetic” character of positivism’s sacerdotal office.¹⁰² Comtian poetry, in fact, recalled the poetic ancient science of *Les soirées*, the most divine knowledge ever possessed by humankind; while the poets he longed for resembled the hierophants that Ballanche celebrated, and that would close history by reviving sentiment with verse.

Comte’s philosophy of history resembled that of Maistre and Saint-Simon. This was true at the level of form. Like his two masters, Comte divided history into alternating phases of order and disorder, synthesis and critique. It was true at the level of method: he used historical narration to establish social truth, assessed social reality empirically without recourse to mathematics,¹⁰³ and developed a Trinitarian obsession¹⁰⁴ akin to *Les soirées*. Finally, it was true in regard to content. Comte praised Catholicism for vastly improving women’s lot¹⁰⁵ and placing morality above politics for the first time.¹⁰⁶ He considered that the Middle Ages had made Western Europe—the “grand Occidental Republic”—by providing order and hence maximizing liberty.¹⁰⁷ Even the political uses of his philosophy were akin to his predecessors’. Like Maistre and the Mennaisians, he took up the cause of freedom of education;¹⁰⁸ and like the latter and Saint-Simon, he advocated the severing of church and state: “The separation of the two powers spiritual and temporal constitutes . . . the true character of the full maturity proper to the social organism, until then too little complete for its general existence to become generally appreciable.”¹⁰⁹ Although *Du pape* itself did not divulge this opinion, its argument that European freedom had arisen from

100. Ibid., 2:404.

101. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:96, 116.

102. Ibid., 4:74.

103. Comte’s demotion of mathematics set him apart from the Saint-Simonians, who resorted frequently to mathematical metaphors. See Antoine Picon, “Industrie et régénération sociale: Les polytechniciens saint-simoniens,” <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/people/faculty/picon/xsts.html>. Buchez, too, expressed progress in mathematical terms. See Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l’homme chez Philippe Buchez*, 262.

104. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:407–8.

105. Ibid., 3:201.

106. Ibid., 2:200.

107. Auguste Comte, *Catéchisme positiviste; ou, Sommaire exposition de la religion universelle en treize entretiens systématiques entre une femme et un prêtre de l’humanité* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), 122.

108. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 4:259.

109. Ibid., 2:348–49.

the struggle between spiritual and temporal powers certainly encouraged it. Finally, Comte attributed social progress, like Maistre, to human nature on Cartesian grounds. The *Système* asserts that “many animals surpass us in energy, in circumspection, or in perseverance, or perhaps even in the collection of those qualities,” but that they cannot “utilize them as much as permits our intellectual and affective preeminence, especially socially.”¹¹⁰ For Comte as for Maistre, humanity is defined by its natural and essential capacity for endless moral and intellectual self-improvement across the ages.

Barbey d’Aurevilly’s philosophy of history—minimal, antiprogressive, and thoroughly antiscientific—was the obverse of Comte’s, an exercise in derogation that coincided with the century’s historical wisdom on only three points. The first was that historical laws exist. The second, that modern history is a succession of catastrophes that began with the Reformation. Contrary to his contemporaries, however, Barbey assured that these catastrophes lacked all redemptive properties. The eighteenth century was “the most profoundly bereft of reason of all the centuries.” As for the French Revolution, although it was “Satanic” as Maistre warned, it was also utterly unregenerative. Even more, it was corrupting. Barbey’s historical pessimism was unrivaled. Aurevillian history is as Augustinian as possible, a process of “loss of meaning, irreversible decline, entropy”¹¹¹ so despondent that it has been interpreted as part of his dandy’s pose.

This very pessimism, however, is indissociable from the third point of historical agreement between Barbey and his contemporaries: an “eschatological impatience and . . . the nostalgia of an original plenitude, an age of gold that had long since disappeared.”¹¹² He thought that men could do nothing to prepare the times to come; but the thought of these times still filled him with all the hopes that enthused Comte and the socialists. This vague exhilaration at the idea of the future, exposed in *Du pape* and *Les soirées* and hinted at in the *Éclaircissement*, is one of the strongest legacies of Maistre’s historical thought. For regardless of the moral and social content that his interpreters of every stripe lent to this world’s hereafter, their faintly glimpsed Second Coming, they all discussed history only to dream of that time when, for the first and last time, the beginning would meet its end in God—or, in Comte’s terms, in Humanity-as-God.

110. Ibid., 1:724.

111. Glaudes, “Barbey d’Aurevilly antimoderne,” 23.

112. Ibid., 24.

Progress through Intuition: Ballanche

In stark contrast with Comte's scientific ambitions, Ballanche's philosophy of history, divided into three ages, is an unfinished exercise in poetic prose that prefers myth to history, and that refers only lyrically to historical particulars. It begins with a prelapsarian legendary age, when the Orient received the knowledge of initiation—that is, the primitive revelation—which arrived in the Occident in the time of Orpheus, and whose contents complement the scriptures. “The Oriental traditions,” Ballanche writes, “have become the Bible's indispensable prolegomena.”¹¹³ Their precise rapport to the Judeo-Christian heritage, though, remains obscure. A great temporal confusion reigns in ancient myths, written as if to disorient rigorous chroniclers, and reflecting the experience of time in high antiquity when age melded into age and mythical characters donned digressing yet mutually inclusive identities. Witness Helen, who was the moon before becoming the wife of Menelaus.

History itself began with a long, patrician phase, when “man was taken out of the domain of eternity to pass into the domain of time.”¹¹⁴ The patricians who first vanquished natural obstacles governed during this period, cementing their rule over the much larger plebeian class by secreting the primordial knowledge of revelation, and monopolizing sacredness along with civil rights like the right to marriage and to entombment. God allowed this because he wished to instruct humanity slowly: these were “severe and garroting” societies “because after the Fall it was necessary to teach moral sentiment little by little.”¹¹⁵

Jesus Christ then initiated the second age of history by abolishing the law of castes¹¹⁶ and divulging the spiritual equality of all men before God. “Christianity [being] fundamentally iniquitous to the initiatory law of theocracy,”¹¹⁷ revelation ceased being a class privilege to become a basic human right. However, eighteen centuries had to pass before Christian spiritual emancipation began to enter the social and political spheres, instating the third and present age of history, whose “true founder”¹¹⁸ was Fénelon. Had France's kings appreciated him more—had Louis, duc de Bourgogne (1682–1712) lived to execute the principles of *Télémaque*, had Louis XIV read sympathetically rather than burned the posthumous manuscripts con-

113. Ballanche, *Prologomènes*, 39.

114. *Ibid.*, 32.

115. *Ibid.*, 166.

116. *Ibid.*, 57.

117. *Ibid.*, 56.

118. *Ibid.*, 159.

taining Fénelon's pedagogy—the Revolution might not have happened. The fact that it did proves that social transformation arrived too late and had to be accomplished illegally, violently,¹¹⁹ and by compressing human history into a single generation.¹²⁰ Only so could patrician control be overcome, and liberation from slavery achieved.

Alone among his contemporaries, Ballanche rejected the idea that he was living through a time of transition. "I, too, believe in a new era," he wrote, referring to Maistre, "but this era has begun. The awaited century exists already. Things speak a language that is also a revelation from God."¹²¹ The task at hand was hence not to complete plebeian emancipation. It was the more onerous one of turning humanity into a race of more highly intelligent beings that could unearth and bear the initiatory knowledge buried in all world traditions. This spiritualization of humanity would benefit the entire chain of being, from the animals, who would be tamed (perhaps in fulfillment of Isaiah 11:6),¹²² to the higher and invisible intelligences.

Just as progress proceeds when the exceptional individuals who make history prophesy, progress stops when they lack insight into the future. Bonaparte was the greatest genius and "the strongest existence to have appeared on earth . . . since primitive times."¹²³ But he fell because he adhered to the patrician "spirit of retardation that never dies."¹²⁴ "Bonaparte did not plunge into the future, and the present escaped him. A great lesson!"¹²⁵ His desire to dictate the present was also the reason he developed morally less than he might have done given his intellectual capacities. Had he been placed in a historical context "in which he had dominated less, . . . it is possible that his moral sentiment would have developed as a function of the development of his intelligence, which would have been one of the most beautiful harmonies in this world."¹²⁶

One must therefore intuit the divine in order to prepare the future by conjuring the most ancient past. Alternatively, one can practice empirical science. Unlike Eckstein, however, Ballanche does not combine science with intuition, which latter he personally prefers. The *Prolégomènes* remember

119. Ibid., 207–8.

120. McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*, 259.

121. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 160.

122. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together" (King James Bible).

123. Ballanche, *Prolégomènes*, 98.

124. Ibid., 195.

125. Ibid., 196.

126. Ibid., 98.

Varro (116 BCE–27 BCE), who established the date of Rome's foundation after extensive research, only to find that an astrologer had arrived at precisely the same result "independently of all chronological science."¹²⁷ Ballanche identified with the astrologer. He praised geology and linguistics as possible paths to the primitive revelation; but he thought the science of his day too incomplete, and himself too ignorant of it.

Ballanchian reconstruction hence proceeds thanks to "intimate thought, divinely assimilating," which "draws its substance and its force from everything that has been," and "tends to become the first element of all civilization, that is to say, a belief."¹²⁸ Because this belief is rooted in the individual, it is subject to palingenesis, dying and resurrecting successively.¹²⁹ *Orphée* is at once the story of a mythical individual and of a symbolic tradition. It seeks to express the "great thought of [Ballanche's] century"¹³⁰ and hasten the arrival of a time when "the identity of all cosmogonies will be proven."¹³¹ But this does not mean that Christianity will be transcended or annulled. On the contrary, alone among world traditions, Christianity is exempt from palingenesis—just as the pope-church of *Du pape* was the only institution in history that was not subject to parabolic cycles of apotheosis and deterioration. In the future, in fact, Christianity will be completely unveiled and expressed, just as Lamennais had hoped to render it through his fact collection. Unlike the socialists, who exult at *Les soirées*' announcement of a "third revelation," Ballanche chides Maistre for expecting new prophecies: "M. de Maistre is waiting for a new century, a new revelation: he does not know, then, that Christianity has said everything!"¹³²

The End of Traditionalist Theodicy: Lamennais versus Lacordaire

Lamennais' first, anonymous work nowhere intimates that he would ultimately abandon history. Quite the reverse: the *Réflexions sur l'état de l'Église de France pendant le XVIII^e siècle et sur sa situation actuelle* (1808) uses the law of alternativity to criticize the revolutionary desertion of the cult and to call for a clerical revival under the Concordat.

127. Ibid., 43–44.

128. Ibid., v.

129. Ibid., 13.

130. Ibid., v.

131. Ibid., 35.

132. Ibid., 160. On Ballanche's denial of the possibility of a new revelation, see McCalla, *Romantic Historiography*, 129.

A great distance separates this polemical piece from the highly theoretical and universalist philosophy of history that Lamennais formulated in the late 1830s and 1840s. Like Bonnetty, Lamennais regarded his own *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* as the introduction to a new philosophical system that he first exposed in a manuscript unpublished until the twentieth century: the *Essai d'un système de philosophie catholique* (1830–31). A Christian speculative philosophy of history developed in collaboration with Ballanche, its daring goal was to embrace “by a wholly rational method the entire order of knowledge on the basis of the most simple concept of Being”.¹³³

The points on which Ballanche and Lamennais now agreed were extensive: all religions are fundamentally identical; Christianity is the expression of universal tradition; Christianity is the voice of all humanity, and particularly of the masses; the essence of Christianity can be only gradually apprehended; its forms must evolve with humanity, progressively ridding itself of social and racial exclusiveness until all barriers of class and nation are broken down; in and through Christianity alone can liberty be realized for individuals and societies; purified Christianity is the truly universal religion of humanity.¹³⁴

Humanity's salvation by history became the ultimate goal of a politics centered on liberty and equality that aimed, like *Du pape*, to reintroduce religion into history in order to smuggle individuals out of history. The revolutionary quality of early conservatism is nowhere more evident than in this historico-religious program and in the departure from traditionalism that followed Lamennais' failed attempt to enforce it.

By the mid-1830s, Lamennais' politics had radicalized to the point that he relinquished Providentialism. “All supernatural intervention of God in Creation is contradictory,”¹³⁵ he wrote in the *Esquisse d'une philosophie*, since, as he clarified later in *De la société première et de ses lois*, “the Universe is . . . but a great society”¹³⁶ whose immanent reason makes it tend to unite with God. Cogently, prayer is no longer an “extraordinary law of the world” capable of altering history's course, as it was for *Les soirées*' three friends. Purely psychological and anthropocentric, it simply affirms being, a “means of union with

133. Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 83.

134. McCalla, *Romantic Historiosophy*, 347–48.

135. Lamennais, *Esquisse d'une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 16:87.

136. Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois, ou de la religion*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 18:3.

God” that is merely beneficial to individuals,¹³⁷ and socially and historically disempowered.

Lamennais’ late philosophy, though, retains some Christian themes. Echoing the Trinitarian obsessions of traditionalists and Saint-Simonians, the *Esquisse d’une philosophie* avers, for instance, that “the Christian dogma of the Trinity, the result of the work of human reason during long centuries and of its progressive development, is the highest point to which it has yet arrived in the science of God.”¹³⁸ But Christianity is now only a wreckage of abstract ideas and no longer a historical tradition, whether sacred or profane. Historical philosophy has departed with it. “The work of God dilates itself,” Lamennais writes; it tends incessantly to return to him. But this is a never-ending process. Under the “great law” that governs it, “Creation [gravitates] toward God through an eternal development, as eternally the curve approaches its asymptote that it never reaches.”¹³⁹ In conspicuous contrast with the narrative of Lamennais’ *Imitatio*, this process of gravitation is never disturbed by the arrival of a Christ who changes the nature of human society. Nor does world history any longer oscillate between the peace achieved by adherence to Christ’s teachings and cataclysms brought on by their violation. Historical paradox never rattles the calm and linear progress of creatures toward their Maker.

Lacking a concrete history, by contrast, the hierarchical cosmos remains in Lamennais’ philosophy until the end. The *Esquisse* mentions intelligent dwellers of the universe, higher up than humanity in the chain of being: “That they do not drag themselves like us in a body of flesh and blood is a consequence of their very elevation, of their lesser limitation. One should not nonetheless imagine that they lack an organism or a body in that sense; but, compared to us, they have a less heavy envelope, more subtle and developed senses.”¹⁴⁰ Helping Creation work its way back to God by acting rationally on lower life forms,¹⁴¹ these superior intelligences recall their analogues of *Les soirées*. So does the immanent God they serve, who—having lost his customary aloofness—has reentered “nature, his true temple,” to prepare “everything” for regeneration and the “birth of a great unity”—enabled by “Religion returned to its pure essence”¹⁴²—that will be both individual and

137. Ibid., 190.

138. Lamennais, *Esquisse d’une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 14:xiii.

139. Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 18:257.

140. Lamennais, *Esquisse d’une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 14:256.

141. Ibid., 14:268–69.

142. Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 18:241.

social, intra- and extrahuman, terrestrial and extraterrestrial. The reassuring progress that Lamennais so longed for in the 1820s and 1830s has finally arrived. It is comprehensive, absolute, homogeneous:

One cannot doubt that life is scattered in the bosom of the whole of Creation. It is certainly not the exclusive attribute of our imperceptible planet. The divine breath fills the Universe, and manifests itself everywhere in a multitude of beings who elevate themselves progressively from the most rudimentary organization, to sentiment and thought, itself progressive, without end, without limit.¹⁴³

At the end of time, self-developing thought will be collective and democratic in its final perfection: “The philosophy, which humanity feels today the need for, which it awaits with impatience, will not be the work of one, but the work of all,”¹⁴⁴ and will help accomplish evil’s disappearance. The nature of evil itself, however, is uncertain. The *Esquisse* echoes Augustine, asserting that “considered in itself, in its most general aspect, evil has nothing positive, it is only a lesser being,” original in matter.¹⁴⁵ More boldly, *De la société première et de ses lois* asserts that “neither good nor evil exists; only facts exist that legitimate themselves by those names.”¹⁴⁶ Paradoxically, sin, *Les soirées*’ main historical agent, is real, but it is also incommunicable like the will that produces it.¹⁴⁷ Triumphant reason absorbs even natural disasters that now refer to divine order rather than Providential punishment: “You believe you see the ruin of a world, you witness its formation. Apparent disorder is nothing other than order itself, established, maintained by the eternal laws that preside over the development of God’s order.”¹⁴⁸ Where, then, catastrophes last in Maistre’s thought, becoming the meaningful events and epochs that constitute history, they are but brief moments that cannot wait to vanish from Lamennais’ last theodicy.

The evolution of the Mennaisian idea of history not only signposts the twists and turns in its author’s intellectual career, it epitomizes also the development and demise of nineteenth-century French historical thought.

143. Lamennais, *Esquisse d’une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 17:32–33.

144. *Ibid.*, 14:xxv.

145. *Ibid.*, 15:18.

146. Lamennais, *De la société première et de ses lois*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 18:150. On Lamennais’ view of evil, see Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 104.

147. Lamennais, *Esquisse d’une philosophie*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 15:59.

148. *Ibid.*, 15:21.

Dehistoricization is the corollary of de-Christianization. This is confirmed by the *Discours sur la loi de l'histoire* that Lamennais' onetime disciple and collaborator, Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, delivered in Toulouse as late as 1854. The *Discours* presents history as Providentially guided and mystically divided into seven "accomplished acts": the period of "universal paternity," or the twenty centuries from Adam to Moses; the period of "universal legislation," begun with Moses and comprising the reigns of David and Solomon; the time of Athens' and of Rome's glory, which witnessed the birth of political unity; the time of Jesus and of the five centuries, ending with Clovis, when Christianity was established; the Middle Ages, over which Saint Louis presided; the "negative times" of Luther and Voltaire; and the age of the French Revolution, "where the history of humanity halts today," and which Lacordaire, like Buchez, identifies as Christianity's achievement. Again like Buchez, and obeying the mystical ternary convention, Lacordaire subdivides each of these periods into three subperiods of formation, apogee, and decadence. That this historical sequence and the divine plan it discloses were both formulated so late suggests that Lacordaire's piety enabled him to preserve, by reinventing, a speculative philosophy of history that was over half a century old.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Lacordaire returned to Catholicism the speculative philosophy of history that Maistre had helped to devise, but that had since developed substantially outside the bounds of the faith.

Yet the *Discours*, like Comte's *Système*, completed in the same year, was a rarity that was fast becoming an exception. By the mid-1850s, salvific history had disbanded, leaving only universal development behind.

The early conservatives wished to confute the revolutionary will to force every individual to take charge of history. To do so, they championed organic, imperceptible development against violent historical change, the discreet and resigned manners of Maistre's "angelic" Counter-Revolution. With time, however, they had to recognize that they needed Anti-Revolution too, that Revolution had to be fought at least partly with its own methods if it was to succumb. This was the insight enshrined in the revolutionary church of *Du pape*. From the 1810s onward, then, Francophone historical thought posited two models of moral progress in tension with one another: one, organic and

149. Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, *Discours sur la loi de l'histoire, prononcé dans la séance publique de l'assemblée de législation de Toulouse, le 2 juillet 1854*, http://www.istorhabreiz.fr/IMG/pdf/Discours_sur_la_loi_de_l_histoire.pdf.

counterrevolutionary, characterized by the infinitesimal interactions between individuals and the institutions that formed them—the minority model preferred by the early Maistre and the late Enfantin; another, critical and antirevolutionary, that began to gain prominence in the mid- to late 1820s, as well as being thoroughly consonant with *Les soirées* and *Du pape*, and that sought to transform society through various religious means—like developing knowledge of spiritual history, of a new social science, or even a new religion. All deemed that prophecy was crucial to the process of historical salvation; but interestingly, none invested much in prayer. As an activity unintended to provide new knowledge, prayer had little appeal in an age obsessed with salvation by facts. Certainly, Lamennais mentioned it, but as a means of affirming the self, not of shaking the universe; while Comte, characteristically, reduced it to one more religious fact that positivist poets could manufacture.

Should we stay out of history in order to remain virtuous, or should we plummet into it and be improved? This was the question these thinkers considered when modeling the stages and process of history; and all of them answered it by suggesting that history and politics must both be transcended by manipulating either religion or a functional substitute of it. Saint-Simon and Buchez wished for the future's history to pass through a reformed Christianity; Comte and Enfantin thought it best to create a new religion; Proudhon wanted a new discipline governed by reason; Ballanche placed history's helm in the hands of self-sacrificing poets who could teach the wisdom of entire cults; Barbey alone despaired, and disdained to lend religion a historic role. In this he was the most orthodox—and, for all his adoration of the Savoyard, the least Maistrian—of the lot, refusing solidly to support religion with worldly means, or to measure virtue by its capacity for success and prophecy.

Maistre's posterity was ill with the spiritual disenchantment that had lodged deep inside his historical thought from the beginning. That was the price of playing the Enlightenment's game, of defending religion on the grounds of its uses. The Saint-Simonians and Lamennais each profaned history in their own way—the former by creating a self-damaging religion impossibly responsible for uniting humanity with a magical historiography; the latter by conjuring a world complacently at rest, empty of crisis and of evil. A self-destructive sacredness melted history even as it entered it; and by 1854, only Comte and Lacordaire continued to affirm that human progress obeys laws at once divine and rational.

Whether by influence or by coincidence, French traditionalists of the 1820s and 1830s—Ballanche, Barbey d'Aureville, Bonnetty, Eckstein, and Lamennais—historicized intuitionism and empiricism to help invent the end days (Barbey alone excepted from this latter ambition), just as Maistre had

done in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*. But the two strands of epistemology never again united in a single system as they had done in Maistre's. Even on their own, though, intuition and experience were still meant to seize the sacred through time, reconstructing humanity's origins and the details of the succession of ages in the interests of aiding historical progress. The despairing irony of it was that the very attempt to restore and tie down the divine was a prelude to its dissolution, to its metamorphosis into politics and metapolitics, the durable and the destroyed, everything and nothing.

Author Query

1. Please provide two page numbers marked as ooo on 44th footnote.

Conclusion

History and Paradox

That Maistre reigned for nearly sixty years over French historical thought can be partly attributed to his mastery of paradoxes. As Emil Cioran observed, paradoxes are indispensable in religion; and in his zeal to save Christianity, Maistre practiced them enthusiastically.¹ To this might be added that paradoxes are the lifelines of the philosophy of history, since history arises from contradictions, within individuals and between social groups. What follows is an attempt to describe the paradoxes at the core of Maistrian historical thought, with a view to gathering together its various strands and tracing its prosperity and wane in the nineteenth century.

The *Considérations sur la France*, Maistre's first major *opus*, opens with a paradox. To Rousseau's famous "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains," Maistre retorts: "We are all attached to the throne of the Supreme Being by a supple chain, which retains us without subjugating us." For Rousseau, the chain is an object to be broken, an evil to be removed. For Maistre, it is "supple"—a quality unexpected in a chain—controlling and bestowing freedom at once, reining in humanity while allowing it to move. History happens within the space of uncertainty delimited by the chain. It emanates

1. Cioran, *Anathemas and Admirations*, 24.

out of the game of freedom between an omnipotent God and the humanity he liberates and confines.

The play between freedom and subjection is governed by sin and punishment. During just times, men and women enjoy their greatest freedom and accumulate sin gradually; while during times of punishment, God exercises his power supremely, as first the exacerbation and then the exhaustion of sin enables liberation from the passions in hardly orthodox ways. A further paradox then arises. Like all Christian philosophies of history, Maistre's is crucially preoccupied with individual destiny. The knight of *Les soirées*, like his creator, is deeply troubled that, in this world, not all those who are punished are guilty, while not all those who are guilty are punished. Religion prescribes that heavenly recompense should be enough for the righteous, and Maistre personally believed this; but he also discerned that, after the Revolution, the rewards of the next life no longer sufficed those who live only for this one.

The doctrine of the reversibility of merits resolved the conundrum. Sacrifice is efficacious, and the immolation of the blameless for the culpable is the link between individual salvation and the worldly good. Even more, sacrifice is the act that enables society to subsist, the moving bridge between particulars and universals that makes history possible. Christianity extends the bridge immeasurably. In its wake, sacrifice is no longer bloody or solely ritualistic: it becomes an act of inward self-violence, any suppression of the passions performed by individuals for the sake of sociability. The moral realm thus enlarged, progress can advance indefinitely.

The idea that Christ's willing self-offering could become a psychological act accessible to every individual had been a staple of Christian thinking since antiquity. It was reborn during the baroque period. Maistre's innovation was to lend it social powers, to transform it into the mechanism of self-breaking that allowed Rousseau's natural man to enter society; to proclaim it as the universal essence of social relations that Lamennais celebrated in the *Esquisse d'une philosophie*; to refashion it, lastly, into the motor of history. It was an astoundingly successful move. Long after the speculative philosophy of history had died in France, Durkheim was still depicting humanity growing ever more fractured and divided as it became more civilized.² The father of disciplinary sociology strove for the social interdependence that he observed increasing as societies moved from "mechanical" or "primitive" stages to "organic" or "advanced" ones—the same social interdependence that Comte

2. See Armenteros, "Revolutionary Violence and the End of History," in Armenteros, Blanning, DiVanna, and Dodds, *Historicising the French Revolution*.

had said would govern in its final perfection over positivist society. To aid this process, Durkheim reasoned, the need for self-directed violence increased as civilization moved ahead. The process was exacerbated to the extent that no sacrifices were ever sufficient to permit individuals or society to be spiritually still. This is where Durkheim parts ways with Maistre. For the latter, accumulating expiation eventually closes the gap in humanity's depths, pushing it toward higher, angelic spheres of existence, and eventually extinguishing history. On the subject of sacrifice, in fact, Durkheim is the pessimistic statist and Maistre the optimistic progressivist. For Maistre does to sacrifice what he does to religion at large. He instrumentalizes it. He revolutionizes it. He turns it into the historical motor that diminishes historical alternations, that turns the oscillation of ages into a progress as linear as that of the church.

Sacrifice has a corollary in the innatism/empiricism dichotomy that is the source of historical production in Maistre's epistemology of love. The knowledge of particulars that individuals accumulate by loving the world confirms, complements, and makes explicit the knowledge of eternal ideas engraved in the human heart. But knowledge acquisition is irregular because it is propelled by divine grace and human desire. It is subject to God's unforeseeable acts of retribution and generosity, to the expansion, breakdown, and collapse of human emotions, those fickle and variable things; so that as humanity struggles ceaselessly to recover the lost revelation with new means, God doles out discoveries, establishing the bounds of its quest.

It is here that we touch upon the most explicit expression of the paradox at the heart of Maistrian history: the idea that time is divided into ages that alternate ceaselessly, yet with ever lesser intensity, until the universe reintegrates into God. Maistre defines two kinds of ages—those determined by knowledge, and those governed by individual spiritual states. The ages defined by knowledge are divided into ages of discovery—or revelation, which in the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* is the same thing—and ages of dissertation, or of sterile, critical repetition. Both spring out of the soul, with the former emanating from united selves, and the latter from divided ones. This model of the succession of ages constitutes the most intimate link between Maistre's historical thought and the philosophy of Saint-Simon. We have seen, throughout part 2 of this book, the various laws of alternativity that the father of socialism and his manifold disciples constructed. Whether they first discerned these models in Maistre or developed them in complete independence is a question that historians may never resolve. What is certain is that both Maistre and the socialists responded to the experience of Revolution with a philosophy of history that constituted much of the shared intellectual background of right and left in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even

more, it was the philosophy that enabled dialogue across the political spectrum. Once the law of alternativity had helped to establish that the true end of human existence was not politics but the moral renewal achieved through the right management and understanding of the laws governing historical time, the conversation between socialists and conservatives could begin.

Critical ages, however, are destined to diminish over time, because human nature—in contrast to animal nature—is to test its limits always, to strive unflinchingly to leave its Providential sphere of existence, to angelise itself and overcome its critical, passionate, animal side. Periods of sin may be followed by ignorance and by the forgetting of universals, but over the long term, the recuperation of universals exceeds forgetfulness. This is the essence of perfectibility, and of the Pelagianism at the core of Maistre's thought. Loving always, wittingly or unwittingly, the God who is determined to save them, humans never cease striving to attain his knowledge.

Human self-overcoming, in turn, depends on the human ability to inhabit the sphere of "*more or less*"—a gray area between what God pleases and what humanity can do: the sphere of the normative. In political theory, this "*more or less*" corresponds roughly to "*indeterminate transcendent constraint*," the belief that there are "preexistent and fixed standards" that are "somewhat indeterminate."³ Maistre's church adheres to these standards. It integrates societies without ever becoming registered in constitutions; and it arbitrates between kings and peoples by obeying unwritten rules. "More or less," in fact, is the domain of a nonabsolutist Maistrian liberty that has never been discussed. Maistre described it in a letter to Bonald: "Among the innumerable madnesses of the moment and of all moments, there is one that is the mother of them all: it is what we called in school the *protopseudos*, the primitive, capital, primordial, and above all original sophism; it is to believe that liberty is something absolute and circumscribed that one has or has not, and that is not susceptible of *more or less*" (emphasis added).⁴

"*More or less*" not only certifies the indefinable quality of human freedom; it defends a radical, traditionalist, and monarchist variety of it whereby individuals, institutions, and groups can transcend God's prescribed boundaries. In political theory, it is key to Maistre's relativism, to his long-observed antiabsolutism, and to his hatred of despotism and imperialism. With time, as he developed his final attitude toward monarchy, it lost importance in his

3. David Lay Williams, "Political Ontology and Institutional Design in Montesquieu and Rousseau," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, 2 (2010): 526.

4. OC, 14:167.

thought. Jaded by kingly folly and the pettiness of his own court, the late Maistre detached himself progressively from temporal monarchies and took his distance—probably unconsciously—from traditionalism. As his church became a revolutionary machine and his popes the Robespierres of the future, as he sought to control political crises with ever greater precision, he saw the future emanating decreasingly out of the divinely obscured and the indeterminate.

Maistrian reason differs significantly from the two models of reason that gained currency during the French Enlightenment. Removed from Descartes' emotionless mechanics, Maistre equates reason with spiritual sentiment. And against Pierre Bayle's individualist, critical reason, he identifies rationality with the traditional.⁵ Yet far from acquiring the supposedly static properties of the tradition it is meant to defend, Maistre's conservative reason is embedded in a nature mutating by definition and operates as a historical force in ways that its eighteenth-century predecessors could not. Where Enlightenment reason had criticized, computed, or discoursed on the salient features of nations and societies, Maistrian reason expands actively in the world, expressing itself through sentiment, religion, customs, institutions, through every single facet of human life or, when verbally conveyed, through prayer, prophecy, and poetry. Concomitantly, and crucially, the negotiatory realm of the exercise of power loses its status as the primary location for reason's exercise. Society, container of politics and constitutions, takes Rousseau's cue to become the new medium of rational expression, the object of a total and detailed mode of description, newly diachronic.

The future is yet never completely knowable in the present. This is due to the relative weakness of human reason, to its irremediable inability to predict completely how Providence will arrange the course of time. Though we may know all of the future's great events through prophecy, we cannot yet weave these events together into a narrative. This is why, unlike the socialists, Maistre's traditionalist heirs sketch only snapshots of the future, meteoric insights into better times, without ever writing them up. Maistre's theory of history itself possesses the same fragmentary quality. Not only is it implicit, embedded in wider discourses, and retrievable only by the reconstructive reader; Maistre's theory of history is also occasionalist. It affords us insights into the process and epochs of history, describing some in deep detail. But it refuses ferociously to be systematic, convinced that complete knowledge does not

5. *Ibid.*, 14:236.

belong to humans, and that excessive knowledge is catastrophic for them—as was demonstrated by the unimaginable “prevarications” that followed the primitive revelation. Maistrian historical thought, in fact, understands itself as contributing to the very history of knowledge it describes. It seeks to help accomplish modern humanity’s most urgent task: to piece together divine knowledge through conscientious study, spiritual self-perfection, and *doux* self-sacrifice. Only under these conditions will the primitive revelation be once more possessed. And only so will Providence start speaking again, bestowing its gifts of knowledge.

But to return to reason. For Maistre, the eternal laws that God engraves in hearts, and that reason encapsulates, lend individuals moral and ontological priority over politics. The good does not derive from political power struggles. It emerges unalterably from each individual as his or her natural and irreducible preserve. The social consequences of this individuality of the good are antithetical to those posited by Rousseau, who wishes individual destinies to coincide seamlessly with those of the collectives they inhabit. Jean-Jacques’ individuals must deposit themselves in society to the point of effacing their own wills, of transferring to society the capacity for guilt and expiation, of making the political morally prior, or, more accurately, of dissolving the political into the publicly moral.

Maistre replaces this model with one wherein history-as-moral-renewal emanates out of individuals, collectives, and God. Individuals make history thanks to their endless conjectures and to their psychological states (unity and division, sacrifice and unregulated violence). Nations, institutions, constitutions, and the church also make history because they are moved by moral “forces” that ensure their success or brilliance but that overtime exhaust themselves like everything human. Last, history emanates out of God, the educator of humankind who punishes and reveals, the generator of chance and provider of circumstances.

This means that human moral energies, individual and collective, are invested in a game with God that never allows collective destiny priority over individual destiny. Unlike Rousseau, Maistre aims less to craft a perfect, harmonious society than to save individual souls. He is, of course, deeply concerned with society’s fate and wishes individuals to serve its needs. His theory of sacrifice, in particular, has much in common with Rousseau’s violent ideal of socialization, and his Christian victim has a capacity to immolate himself for the good of the whole that far exceeds that of Rousseau’s ideal citizen. The difference, though, is that, in trying to annihilate his will, the Maistrian victim cannot, paradoxically, destroy it. On the contrary, desire for the good, even—especially—at the price of suffering, fortifies the will, and self-denial

willingly practiced repairs a volition broken by sin. Individuals and morality both precede a political realm that is yet inviolable. Machiavellianism must therefore be eschewed, and politics moralized: for only a genuine concern with the moral good can avert historical misfortune.

Maistre's theory that history and violence emerge from broken wills re-focused the problem of evil on the individual. Rejecting the morality of the senses in favor of the deontology of morals, it refused to adduce evil to any cause other than original sin. On this point, Maistre was the Enlightenment's unmovable enemy, the destroyer of the *idéologues'* contention that human happiness depends on institutional reform, the unqualified foe of the Rousseau who said that evil springs partly from circumstance and context. But Maistre did not simply attack. He also adapted the age-old theory of individual moral agency to the brand-new context of historical philosophy. The move opened up an exhilarating possibility. Now, for the very first time, it might finally be possible—once concerted individual actions had managed to arrest history—to eradicate moral evil completely. And when this happened, politics would vanish as well! Mad though it may sound to our tired ears, this was the dream that fired the imaginations of Maistre's nineteenth-century interpreters.

Pondering this vision, Saint-Simon's heirs were fervent, enthusiastic. But unable to wait for Providence to deliver the third revelation that would convey the instructions of regeneration, they ventured to write the revelation themselves, to turn the instinct for God into a manipulable tool of social reorganization, a total alternative to politics. Maistre himself had pointed in this direction toward the end of his life, when he recommended not only that individuals submit but also that the pope-church arbitrate politically in times of crisis—that it fabricate politics in emulation of Revolution. However, in principle at least, Maistre's politics remained something that only God decreed, and that human beings could neither create nor organize. His popes of the future wore the Phrygian cap only in extraordinary times. Unlike Saint-Simon and his disciples, Maistre never advocated that temporal sovereigns obey spiritual ones except when no other recourse remained. Nor did he recommend that priests govern nations, or that religion be refashioned to contain and ruin politics. Maistre may have despaired of kings, revolutionary leaders, and all manner of politicians, but he never proposed that they be replaced with other classes of men.

The Saint-Simonians' sexual means of laying politics to waste, inspired by his own call for a clerical revival, would also have horrified him. Enfantin's call for the "life of abandonment" instituted a hedonistic religion whereby

sexual rapports rather than politics absorbed individual moral energies, to the extent that the social individual was not man or woman, but the sexual couple of man–woman. It was with the aim of sacralizing sex to destroy politics that the Saint-Simonians titled the fifth of their *Lettres sur la politique et la religion* “Identité de la *politique* et de la *religion*”—a title that Maistre would have disapproved, if only because he always insisted on the subordination—and hence on the survival—of politics. Enfantin and his followers further inverted Maistre by turning sex—an antisacrifice—into a way of exceeding violence altogether, and of transforming male and female individuals into fusional but mostly transient couples, themselves continuously engaged in fluctuating sexual rapports with others. Insofar as Enfantin was convinced that men and women would be happy like this, he remained concerned with individual destiny. Insofar, however, as his social individuals were actually couples, his variety of socialism eradicated the individual as s/he had until then been known, eradicating politics in the process.

In sexual matters, Comte was Enfantin’s antipole, a defender of the patriarchal family who despised free love,⁶ forbade divorce, condemned “all the current utopians, like the previous ones,” for being “deeply taken with anti-domestic aberrations,”⁷ and praised Christianity, like Maistre, for improving women’s social condition through the sanctification of permanent monogamy.⁸ In fact, Comte went so far as to advocate celibacy within marriage, like the ancient Christians, as the state most conducive to moral perfection.⁹ Yet positivism, too, reconceived the individual. For although Comte had little concern for individual destiny, the individual retained meaning in his system insofar as s/he had to strive to be remembered. This, however, did not prevent religion from replacing politics in his case as well, since the Religion of Humanity regenerated each and every soul, bringing it as close as possible to perfection, and minimizing the need for public spaces. Overall, when making the spiritual prior to the temporal, Saint-Simon’s heirs were much more intrepid than the Savoyard.

It makes sense that Maistre’s historical thought should go to die in socialism and positivism. Both systems were less interested in the process and causes of history than in the age of gold at its end, a time without conflict and contradiction bereft of particularities. This ideal fed also the Mennaisians’ tendency to undo history, which Maistre spotted in Lamennais’ thought from

6. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 2:379.

7. Comte, *Système de politique positive*, 2:178.

8. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 77.

9. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3:324.

the start, when he counseled the young Breton to be wary of his doctrine of common sense. Barbey d'Aurevilly would have said that the advice was prophetic, and in retrospect, Lamennais' works of the 1820s prefigure his future apostasy. Wholly concentrated on the discovery of a general truth, they are innocent of paradox, seeking far more to describe society than to detail the tensions of the individual-society rapport. Indeed, Lamennais' final abandonment of history is the natural offspring of a Christian philosophy of history curiously—and, in the end, impossibly—unconcerned with the individual.

Conversely, traditionalist thinkers who remained so all their lives—Ballanche, Eckstein—continued focusing on the particular to the point of viewing exemplary individuals—Ballanche's Orpheus, his Hébal and *homme sans nom*, Eckstein's Mercédès—as symbols and agents of human and national history. Their vibrant history was full of paradoxes; and although some day it would end, human design would not achieve this. As long as individuals remained solidly autonomous and inwardly divided, and as long as history emanated from them, no human mind could devise the final solution for violence, social problems, and the general pain of life. To be sure, history could be minimized, and fragments of the future divined; but violence would always remain the order of the day, and the future would never be fully known until it had become the present, because only Providence can arrange the end of time. The religious science of Gerbet, Eckstein, and Bonnetty is hence a simple auxiliary to polemics and individual spiritual growth that bears little resemblance to the religious science of Saint-Simon and his heirs, that massive instrument of social reorganization. Still, there is a paradox here, since from a traditionalist perspective, religion refers to the sublime, to the unspeakable, to that which cannot be carried by words and which is only degraded by science, as Maistre repeatedly warned. But the paradox began with Maistre himself, who exposed his “treasures of erudition”¹⁰ in voluminous compositions while condemning writing and specialized knowledge—who submitted completely to historical imperatives in the hope of furthering their abandonment.

When utopian socialism died in 1848, it took the speculative philosophy of history to the grave with it. But the agony had begun long before. In striving for the last phase of history, in designing perfect societies without conflict, Comte and the Saint-Simonians broke the oscillating bond between the individual and society that made Maistrian historical thought possible. Eighteen forty-eight encouraged this release; and Durkheim enshrined it in

10. S. Zikhariev quoted in *Triomphe, Joseph de Maistre*, 276.

his sociology, which, for all its debt to Comte, deleted the Law of the Three Stages by assuming in silence that something resembling its last age had arrived. It was an age, however, still capable of history: Durkheim resembled the traditionalists, and reflected his more disenchanted times, by renouncing the possibility of ever really halting time.

Yet the idea of history-as-salvation itself did not expire with Saint-Simon's manifold disciples. Maintaining the contrary would be to give too much credit to Marx's claim that his thought owed nothing to his utopian predecessors. Although the torrent of Marxian history that swept individuals along was hardly concerned with their becoming, the torrent was both salvific and morally progressive. As such, it differed less from traditionalist models than either Maistre or Marx would have preferred to believe. Historical sociology continued to enjoy rising fortunes in Germany, and in our time it has even made an impressive conquest in the philosophy of Habermas.¹¹ But it had very few relatives in France after 1848, and possibly none after 1854.

A final thought. In helping bestow normality and the social fact to the moral sciences, Maistre's philosophy of history forged one of its most enduring legacies. He was among the first, if not *the* first, to posit facts as history's conduits and makers, as the main pawns in a match between God and humanity over the organization of chance and the determination of normality. This was the game that impelled the provocative, Pelagian reflections of Counter-Revolution, that chafing child of the Enlightenment that, ever warning against reason's fallacies, yet strove unfailingly to understand history rationally. And it is partly to Maistre, its most influential representative in historical matters, that we owe our shaken yet enduring conviction that reflecting on history, retrieving historical facts, and practicing history as a discipline can improve us as humans.

11. Long before Habermas publicly revealed his Christian sympathies, Quentin Skinner saw in him a Christian philosopher of history. See Skinner, "Habermas' Reformation," *New York Review of Books*, October 7, 1982.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Manuscripts

Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille. CD-ROM du fonds de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 1996.

Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S. S. Uvarovu 1810–1852. State Historical Museum, Moscow, 62–82.

Printed Sources

Annales de philosophie chrétienne. 16 vols., 164 issues. Paris, 1830–1913.

Arlès-Dufour, Barthélémy-François, Arthur Enfantin, César Lhabitant, Laurent de l'Ardèche, Henri Fournel, and Adolphe Guérault. “Notice historique.” In Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon and Prosper Barthélémy Enfantin, *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d’Enfantin*. 47 vols. Paris: E. Dentu, 1865–78.

Augustine of Hippo. *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum ad Marcellinum libri tres*. Translated by Philip Schaff. *Documenta catholica omnia*. [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354–0430,_Augustinus,_De_Peccatorum_Meritis_Et_Remissione_Et_De_Baptismo_Parvulorum_\[Schaff\],_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354–0430,_Augustinus,_De_Peccatorum_Meritis_Et_Remissione_Et_De_Baptismo_Parvulorum_[Schaff],_EN.pdf).

Bacon, Francis. *Oeuvres de François Bacon, chancelier d’Angleterre*. Translated and edited by Antoine Lasalle. 15 vols. Dijon: Frantin imprimeur, 1799–1803.

Ballanche, Pierre-Simon. *Antigone. L’homme sans nom*. Paris: H.-L. Delloye, 1841.

———. *Essai sur les institutions sociales considérées dans leurs rapports avec les idées nouvelles*. 1818. Edited by Georges Navet. *Corpus des oeuvres de philosophie en langue française*. Paris: Fayard, 1991.

———. *La ville des expiations*. Paris: H. Falque, 1907.

———. *Orphée*. Essais de palingénésie. 9 books. Paris: Jules Didot, 1829.

———. *Prolégomènes*. Essais de palingénésie sociale. Paris: Jules Didot, 1827.

Barbey d’Aurevilly, Jules. *Les prophètes du passé*. Paris: Louis Hervé, 1851.

———. *Oeuvres critiques complètes*. Edited by Pierre Glaudes and Catherine Mayaux. 4 vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004–09.

Barthelet, Philippe, ed. *Joseph de Maistre*. Les dossiers H, Geneva: L’Âge d’Homme, 2005.

Baston, Guillaume-André-René. *Réclamations pour l’église de France et pour la vérité, contre l’ouvrage de M. le Cte de Maistre intitulé “Du pape,” et contre sa suite, ayant pour titre, “De l’église gallicane dans son rapport avec le souverain pontife.”* 2 vols. Paris, 1821.

- Bautain, Louis. *La religion et la liberté considérées dans leurs rapports*. Paris: Périsse frères, 1848.
- Bazard, Saint-Amand, ed. *Aux chefs des églises des départements: Religion saint-simoniennne, 1830–36*. Paris: Publications saint-simoniennes, 1830–36.
- . *Doctrine de Saint-Simon, Exposition, Première année, 1829*. Edited by C. Bouglé and E. Halévy. Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1924.
- Bergier, Nicolas-Sylvestre. *Dictionnaire de théologie*. Besançon: Outhenin-Chalandre, 1843.
- . *Le déisme réfuté par lui-même; ou, Examen des principes d'incrédulité répandus dans les divers ouvrages de M. Rousseau, en forme de lettres*. Paris: Humblot, 1766.
- . *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion, avec la réfutation des erreurs qui lui ont été opposées dans les différens siècles*. 12 vols. Paris: Moutard, 1780.
- Bernoulli, Jacob. *Ars conjectandi, opus posthumum. Accedit Tractatus de seriebus infinitis, et epistola gallice scripta de ludo pilae reticularis*. Basel: Thurneysen, 1713.
- Bérulle, Pierre de. OC. Edited by Michel Dupuy. 6 vols. Paris: Cerf, 1995–97.
- Blacas, Pierre Louis Jean Casimir, and Joseph de Maistre. *Joseph de Maistre et Blacas: Leur correspondance inédite et l'histoire de leur amitié, 1804–1820*. Edited by Ernest Daudet. Paris: Pion, 1908.
- Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, Antoine. *De la douleur*. 3rd ed. First published 1849. Paris: Victor Palmé, 1878.
- . *De l'unité spirituelle; ou, De la société et de son but au-delà du temps*. Paris, n.d.
- Bonald, Louis de. *Lettres à Joseph de Maistre*. Edited by Michel Toda. Étampes: Clovis, 1997.
- . *Oeuvres complètes*. 15 vols. Geneva: Slatkine, 1982.
- Bonnet, Charles. *Palingénésie philosophique; ou, Idées sur l'état passé et l'état futur des êtres vivans*. Geneva: C. Philibert and B. Chirol, 1769.
- Bonnetty, Augustin. *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*. 164 vols. Paris, 1830–1913.
- . *Table alphabétique et raisonnée de tous les auteurs sacrés et profanes qui ont été découverts et édités récemment dans les 43 volumes récemment publiés par S. E. le cardinal Mai*. Paris: Moquet, 1850.
- Buchez, Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin. *Introduction à la science de l'histoire ou science du développement de l'humanité*. Paris: Paulin, 1833.
- Buchez, Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin, and P. C. Roux-Lavergne. *Histoire parlementaire de la révolution française; ou Journal des assemblées nationales depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815*. 40 vols. Paris, 1834–38.
- Burke, Edmund. *Burke: Pre-Revolutionary Writings*. Edited by Ian Harris. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Chateaubriand, François-René de. *Oeuvres de Chateaubriand*. 20 vols. Paris: Dufour, Moulat and Boulanger, 1860–63.
- Comte, Auguste. *Catéchisme positiviste; ou, Sommaire exposition de la religion universelle en treize entretiens systématiques entre une femme et un prêtre de l'humanité*. First published in 1852. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966.
- . *Système de politique positive*. 4 vols. Paris: L. Mathias, 1851–54.
- Condillac, Étienne-Bonnot de. “Dictionnaire de synonymes.” *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac*. Edited by Georges Le Roy. Auteurs Modernes. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951.

- D'Alembert, Jean Le Rond, and Denis Diderot, eds. *Encyclopédie; ou, Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. 17 vols. Neufchâtel [Paris], 1751–72.
- Delolme, Jean-Louis. *La constitution de l'Angleterre; ou, État du gouvernement anglais comparé avec la forme républicaine et avec les autres monarchies de l'Europe*. Amsterdam: Van Harrevelt, 1771.
- . *Sur deux traductions nouvelles de "l'Imitation de J. C." et principalement sur celle de M. Genoude, lettre d'un docteur en théologie à M. l'abbé de Bonnev . . . à Vienne*. N.p., n.d.
- Diderot, Denis. "Génie." In D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 7:581–84.
- Dubos, Jean-Baptiste. *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules*. 3 vols. Paris: Osmont, 1734.
- Eckstein, Ferdinand. *De l'Espagne: Considérations sur son passé, son présent, son avenir, fragments*. Paris: Bourgogne and Martinet, 1836.
- Enfantin, Barthélémy Prosper. *Correspondance philosophique et religieuse, 1843–1845*. Paris: Lacrampe fils et Cie, 1847.
- . *Économie politique et politique: Religion saint-simonienne; Articles extraits du Globe*. Paris: Bureau du Globe, 1831.
- . *Examen critique d'une traduction nouvelle de "l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ" par M. de La Mennais ou M. de La Mennais convaincu de plagiat*. Paris: Dentu, 1824.
- . *Réunion générale de la famille. Enseignements du Père Suprême*. Paris: Librairie saint-simonienne, 1832.
- Enfantin, Barthélémy Prosper, and Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon. *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin, précédées de deux notices historiques et publiées par les membres du Conseil institué par Enfantin pour l'exécution de ses dernières volontés*. 47 vols. Paris: E. Dentu and E. Leroux, 1865–78.
- Fénelon, François de Salignac de La Moth. *Les aventures de Télémaque*. Edited by Jacques Le Brun. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- Gerbet, Philippe. *Conférences de philosophie catholique: Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*. Paris: Bureaux de l'agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse, and chez Eugène Renduel, 1832.
- . *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique*. Paris: Bureau du "Mé-morial catholique," 1829.
- Giraud, Sylvain-Marie. *Prêtre et hostie: Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ et son prêtre considérés dans l'éminente dignité du sacerdoce et les saintes dispositions de l'état d'hostie*. 2 vols. Paris, 1885.
- Grivel, Fidèle de, and Joseph de Maistre. *Religion et mœurs des russes*. Edited by Ivan Gagarin. Bibliothèque slave elzvirienne. Paris: E. Leroux, 1879.
- Hume, David. *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*. Foreword by William B. Todd. 6 vols. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983. Vol. 1. The Online Library of Liberty, http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=695&layout=html.
- . *A Treatise of Human Nature*. London: Penguin, 1969.
- Jaucourt, Louis de. "Sacrifice." In D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 16:478–84.
- . "Victime artificielle." In D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 17:243.
- . "Victime humaine." In D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 17:240–43.

- Kant, Immanuel. "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft." In *Kants Werke*. 11 vols., 6:1–202. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1968.
- . *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated and edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Lacordaire, Henri-Dominique. *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, ed. A. Chauvin, 5 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1912–14.
- . *Discours sur la loi de l'histoire, prononcé dans la séance publique de l'assemblée de législation de Toulouse, le 2 juillet 1854*. http://www.istorhabreiz.fr/IMG/pdf/Discours_sur_la_loi_de_l_histoire.pdf.
- Lamartine, Alphonse de. *Souvenirs et portraits*. 3rd ed. 2 vols. Paris: Hachette, Furne, Jouvet, Pagnerre, 1874.
- Lamennais, Félicité Robert de. *De la religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil*. 3rd ed. Paris: Bureau du mémorial catholique, 1826.
- . *Félicité de Lamennais. Correspondance générale*. Edited by Louis Le Guillou. 9 vols. Paris: A. Colin, 1973–81.
- . *Les discussions critiques: Journal de la crise mennaisienne, gènèse et édition du manuscrit 356 de la bibliothèque universitaire de Rennes*. Edited by Louis Le Guillou. Paris: A. Colin, 1967.
- . Letter to the comtesse de Senfft, October 8, 1834. In Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre*, 569.
- . *Oeuvres complètes*. Edited by Louis Le Guillou. 21 vols. Geneva: Slatkine, 1980–81.
- Laverdant, Gabriel-Désiré [Maître Petit Jean]. "Un aigle socialiste." In Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre*, 746–47.
- Le conservateur*. 9 vols., 105 issues. Paris, 1818–21.
- Le défenseur*. Paris: Nicolle, 1820.
- Lerminier, Eugène. "L'interprète du passé." In Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre*, 747.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: Thomas Tegg, 1825.
- Maistre, Joseph de. *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"*. Edited and translated by Richard A. Lebrun. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.
- . *Considerations on France*. Edited and translated by Richard A. Lebrun, 2nd ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . *Correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre, 1811–1817*. Edited by Albert Blanc. 2 vols. Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1860.
- . *De la souveraineté du peuple: Un anti-contrat social*. Edited by Jean-Louis Darcel. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992.
- . *Du pape*. Edited by Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail. Geneva: Droz, 1966.
- . *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*. In *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*.
- . *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*. Edited by Antoine Faivre and Jean Rebotton. Geneva: Slatkine, 1938.
- . *Éloge de Victor-Amédée III, duc de Savoie, roi de Sardaigne, de Chipre et de Jérusalem, prince de Piémont, etc.* Chambéry, 1775.

- . *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon*. Translated and edited by Richard A. Lebrun. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.
- . *Joseph de Maistre: Écrits sur la révolution*. Edited by Jean-Louis Darcel. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.
- . *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*. Edited by Pierre Glaudes. Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007.
- . *Les carnets du comte Joseph de Maistre, livre journal 1790–1817*. Edited by Xavier de Maistre. Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1923.
- . *Les soirées de Saint Pétersbourg; ou, Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*. First published in 1821. Edited by Jean-Louis Darcel. 2 vols. Geneva: Slatkine, 1993.
- . *Lettres et opuscules inédits du Cte Joseph de Maistre, précédés d'une notice biographique par son fils, le Cte Rodolphe de Maistre*. 2 vols. Paris: A. Vaton, 1851.
- . *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick*. First published 1925. In *Écrits maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis francs-maçons*, edited by Antoine Faivre and Jean Rebotton. Geneva: Slatkine, 1938.
- . *Mémoires politiques et correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre, avec explications et commentaires historiques par Albert Blanc*. Edited by Albert Blanc. 3rd ed. Paris: Michel Lévy, 1864.
- . *Oeuvres complètes de Joseph de Maistre*. 14 vols. Lyon: Vitte and Perrussel, 1874–77; repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1979.
- Mallet, Edme. "Anthropophages." In D'Alembert and Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 1:498.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. First published 1865. Cirencester: Echo Library, 2005.
- Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de. *De l'esprit des lois*. First published 1748. Edited by Laurent Versini. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- Novalis. *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis: Werk und Forschung*. Edited by Herbert Uerlings. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991.
- Origen. *Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide*. Edited by Jean Scherer. Paris: Cerf, 1960.
- Ozanam, Frédéric. *Deux chanceliers d'Angleterre*. Paris: Debécourt and Perisse; Lyon, Perisse, 1836.
- . *Réflexions sur la doctrine de Saint-Simon*. n.p., 1831.
- Plato. *The Laws*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu//Plato/laws.html>.
- Pompéry, Édouard de. *Théorie de l'association et de l'unité universelle de C. Fourier: Introduction religieuse et philosophique*. Paris: Capelle, 1841.
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph. *Théorie du mouvement constitutionnel au XIXe siècle: contradictions politiques*. Paris: Librairie internationale, 1870.
- . *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*. Edited by Roger Picard. 19 vols. Paris: Rivière, 1927.
- Quetelet, Adolphe. *Lettres à S.A.R. le duc régnant de Saxe-Cobourg et Gotha, sur la théorie des probabilités, appliquée aux sciences morales et politiques*. Brussels: Hayez, 1846.
- Revue des deux mondes*. 1829–.

- Reybaud, Louis. *Études sur les réformateurs ou socialistes modernes*. 6th ed. Paris: Guillaumin, 1849.
- Reynaud, Jean. "De la société saint-simonienne et des causes qui ont amené sa dissolution." In Bazard, *Aux chefs des églises des départements: Religion saint-simonienne*. Paris: Publications saint-simoniennes, 1830–36.
- Rodrigues, Eugène. *Lettres d'Eugène Rodrigues sur la religion et la politique*. Paris: Bureau du Globe, 1832.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Correspondance complète de Rousseau*. Edited by R. A. Leigh. 52 vols. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1979.
- . *Oeuvres complètes*. Edited by Bernard Gagnebin. 4 vols. La Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.
- Saint-Martin, Louis-Claude de. *L'homme de désir*. First published 1802. Edited by Robert Amadou. Paris: Rocher, 1994.
- . *Lettre à un ami; ou, Considérations politiques, philosophiques, et religieuses, sur la révolution française*. Paris: J.-B. Louvet, 1794–95.
- Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de. *Le nouveau christianisme et les écrits sur la religion*. First published 1825. Edited by Henri Desroches. Paris: Seuil, 1969.
- Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de, and Augustin Thierry. *De la réorganisation de la société européenne; ou, De la nécessité et des moyens de rassembler les peuples de l'Europe en un seul corps politique, en conservant à chacun son indépendance nationale*. Paris: A. Egron/Delaunay, 1814.
- Senli, Pierre-Élie. *Purgatoire de feu M. le comte Joseph de Maistre, ancien ministre de S. M. le Roi de Sardaigne, membre de l'Académie royale des sciences de Turin, etc; pour l'expiation de certaines fautes morales qu'il a commises dans ses derniers écrits*. Paris: Haut-Coeur et Gayet, 1823.
- Staël, Germaine de. *De l'Allemagne*. First published 1813. Edited by Simone Balayé. Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1968.
- Sturdza, Alexander. *Oeuvres posthumes*. 5 vols. Paris: Dentu, 1859.
- Tacitus. *The Annals*. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb. The Internet Classics Archive. <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.3.iii.html>.
- Thomas à Kempis. *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ*. Translated and edited by Eugène de Genoude. 3rd ed. Paris, 1822.
- . *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ*. [Translated by Eugène de Genoude.] Translated and edited by Félicité de Lamennais. 2nd ed. Chambéry, 1826.
- . *L'imitation de Jésus-Christ, nouvelle édition, avec des réflexions, des pratiques nouvelles et des extraits de la traduction de Pierre Corneille*. Edited by Louis Bautain. Paris: Furne, 1852.
- Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican province. <http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/home.html>.
- Voltaire, François-Marie Arouet. *Voltaire: Correspondance*. Edited by Theodore Besterman. 13 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.
- Willermoz, Jean-Baptiste. *Instruction secrète des grands profès*. Edited by Antoine Faivre. In René Le Forestier, *La franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste*. Paris: Mouton, 1970, 1023–49.

Secondary Sources

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Armenteros, Carolina. "Maistre's Rousseaus." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 79–103.
- . "Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge." In *Joseph de Maistre and His European Readers: From Friedrich von Gentz to Isaiah Berlin*, edited by Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun, 203–38. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- . "Revolutionary Violence and the End of History: The Divided Self in Francophone Thought, 1762–1914." In *Historicising the French Revolution*, edited by Carolina Armenteros, Tim Blanning, Isabel DiVanna, and Dawn Dodds, 2–38. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008.
- Armenteros, Carolina, and Richard A. Lebrun, eds. *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*. *SVEC* 2011:1. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- . *The New enfant du siècle: Joseph de Maistre as a Writer*. *St. Andrews Studies in French History and Culture*. St. Andrews, UK: Centre for French History and Culture of the University of St. Andrews, 2010.
- "Augustin Bonnetty." *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02677a.htm> (accessed March 26, 2009).
- Baker, Keith. "Closing the French Revolution: Saint-Simon and Comte." In *The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789–1848*. 4 vols., edited by François Furet and Mona Ozouf, 3:323–39. *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989.
- . *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- . *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Barbeau, Aimee E. "The Savoyard Philosopher: Deist or Neoplatonist?" In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 161–89.
- Barthelet, Philippe. "The Cambridge Platonists Mirrored by Joseph de Maistre." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 67–77.
- . "Un demi-jour doré . . ." In Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre*, 17–23.
- Beiser, Frederick C. *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Bellah, Robert N. "Durkheim and History." *American Sociological Review* 24, 4 (1959): 447–61.
- Berg, Christian. "Théodicées victimales au dix-neuvième siècle en France (de Joseph de Maistre à J.-K. Huysmans)." In *Victims and Victimization in French and Francophone Literature*, edited by Buford Norman, 87–100. French Literature. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Edited by Henry Hardy. London: Hogarth Press, 1979.
- Berthiot, François. *Le baron d'Eckstein, journaliste et critique littéraire*. Paris: Éditions des écrivains, 1998.

- Bertier de Sauvigny, Guillaume de. *La Restauration*. 2nd ed. L'Histoire Series. Paris: Flammarion, 1963.
- Bongie, Laurence L. "Hume, 'Philosophe' and Philosopher in Eighteenth-Century France." *French Studies* 15 (1961): 213–27.
- . "Hume and Skepticism in Late Eighteenth-Century France." In *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800: Skepticism in Philosophy, Science and Society*, edited by Johan van der Zande and R. H. Popkin, 15–30. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998.
- Bourguet, Marie-Noëlle. *Déchiffrer la France: La statistique départementale à l'époque napoléonienne*. Paris: Archives contemporaines, 1989.
- Bowman, Frank Paul. "Illuminism, Utopia, Mythology." In *The French Romantics*, edited by D. G. Charlton. 2 vols. 1:76–112. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- . *Le Christ romantique*. Geneva: Droz, 1973.
- . "'Precious Blood' in Religion, Literature, Eroticism, and Politics." In *French Romanticism: Intertextual and Interdisciplinary Readings*, 81–105. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Bradley, Owen. "Maistre's Theory of Sacrifice." In Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, 65–83.
- . *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Bremond, Henri. *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France: Depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*. 11 vols. Paris: A. Colin, 1924–33.
- Bressollette, Claude. *L'abbé Maret: Le combat d'un théologien pour une démocratie chrétienne, 1830–1851*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1877.
- Brett, Annabel S. *Liberty, Right and Nature: Individual Rights in Later Scholastic Thought. Ideas in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Brian, Éric. *La mesure de l'état. Administrateurs et géomètres au XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: A. Michel, 1994.
- Buche, Joseph. *L'école mystique de Lyon, 1776–1847*. Lyon: A. Rey, 1935.
- Burson, Jeffrey. *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2010.
- Burtin, Nicolas. *Un semeur d'idées au temps de la restauration, le baron d'Eckstein*. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1931.
- Busst, A. J. L. "Ballanche and Saint-Simonianism." *Australian Journal of French Studies* 9 (1972): 290–307.
- Camcastle, Cara. *The More Moderate Side of Joseph de Maistre: Views on Political Liberty and Political Economy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.
- Cannon, Garland. *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Translated by Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951.
- . *The Platonic Renaissance in England*. Translated by James P. Pettegrove. 2nd ed. New York: Gordian, 1970.
- Certeau, Michel de, et al. *Histoire spirituelle de la France*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1964.
- Chartier, Roger. *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.

- Cioran, E. M. *Anathemas and Admirations*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Quartet Books, 1992.
- Clines, David J. A. "In Search of the Indian Job." In *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967–1998*. 2 vols., 2:770–91. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Compagnon, Antoine. *Les antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.
- Craiutu, Aurelian. *Liberalism under Siege: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003.
- Crossley, Ceri. *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Darcel, Jean-Louis. "Maistre's Libraries." In Lebrun, *Maistre Studies*, 3–41.
- Darcel, Jean-Louis, Pierre Glaudes, and Jean-Yves Pranchère. *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*. In *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, edited by Pierre Glaudes. Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007.
- Darnton, Robert. *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- De Dijn, Annelien. *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society? Ideas in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Delamarre, Alexandre J.-L. "Le pouvoir spirituel et la ruine de la constitution catholique chez Joseph de Maistre et Auguste Comte." *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 175 (1985): 423–60.
- Deneken, Michel. "Bautain, un théologien romantique français?" In Hiebel and Perrin, *Louis Bautain: L'abbé-philosophe de Strasbourg (1796–1867)*, 83–103.
- Denizet, Jean. "Joseph de Maistre Economist." In Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, 84–104.
- Dermenghem, Émile. *Joseph de Maistre, mystique: Ses rapports avec le martinisme, l'illuminationisme et la franc-maçonnerie, l'influence des doctrines mystiques et occultes sur sa pensée religieuse*. Paris: La Connaissance, 1923.
- Descostes, François. *Joseph de Maistre pendant la révolution, ses débuts diplomatiques, le Marquis de Sales et les émigrés, 1789–1797*. Tours: A. Mame et fils, 1895.
- Desrosières, Alain. *La politique des grands nombres: Histoire de la raison statistique*. Paris: La Découverte, 1993.
- Dunn, John. *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises on Government"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Eckalbar, John C. "The Saint-Simonian Philosophy of History: A Note." *History and Theory* 16 (1977): 40–44.
- Edwards, David W. "Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803–1828." *Slavic Review* 36 (1977): 54–75.
- Everdell, William R. *Christian Apologetics in France, 1730–1790: The Roots of Romantic Religion*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987.
- Fattori, Marta. "Baconiana: Nuove prospettive nella ricezione e fortuna delle opere di Francis Bacon." *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 3 (2003): 405–22.
- Fontana, Biancamaria. "The Napoleonic Empire and the Europe of Nations." In Pagden, *The Idea of Europe*, 116–28.

- Forbes, Duncan. "'Scientific' Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar." *Cambridge Journal* 7 (1953–54): 643–70.
- Fureix, Emmanuel. *La France des larmes: Deuils politiques à l'âge romantique (1814–1840)*. Seyssel: Champ-Vallon, 2009.
- Garrard, Graeme. *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- . "Maistre, Judge of Jean-Jacques: An Examination of the Relationship between Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Joseph de Maistre and the French Enlightenment." D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1995.
- . "Rousseau, Maistre and the Counter-Enlightenment." *History of Political Thought* 15 (1994): 97–120.
- Gay, Peter. *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*. Vol. 1, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*. London: Random House, 1966.
- Gengembre, Gérard. *La contre-révolution; ou, L'histoire désespérante*. 2nd ed. Paris: Imago, 1999.
- George, Albert Joseph. *Pierre-Simon Ballanche, Precursor of Romanticism*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1945.
- Gianturco, Elio. "Joseph de Maistre and Giambattista Vico: Italian Roots of De Maistre's Political Culture." PhD diss., Columbia University, 1937.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm." In *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi, 96–125. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Glaudes, Pierre. "Ballanche." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1129–31.
- . "Barbey d'Aurevilly antimoderne: L'héritage maistrien." In *Esthétique de Barbey d'Aurevilly*, 17–44. Études romantiques et dix-neuviémistes. Paris: Garnier, 2009.
- . "Blanc de Saint-Bonnet." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1137–38.
- . "Joachim de Flore." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1203–5.
- . *Joseph de Maistre et les figures de l'histoire: Trois essais sur un précurseur du romantisme français*. Cahiers romantiques. Clermont-Ferrand: Librairie Nizet, 1997.
- . "Saint-Simonisme." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1283–85.
- Gouhier, Henri. "Rousseau et Fénelon." In *Reappraisals of Rousseau: Studies in Honour of R. A. Leigh*, edited by S. Harvey, M. Hobson, D. J. Kelley, and S. B. Taylor, 279–89. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980.
- Grange, Julie. "Louis Bautain: Une réfutation traditionaliste de l'éclectisme." In Hiebel and Perrin, *Louis Bautain: L'abbé-philosophe de Strasbourg (1796–1867)*, 17–34.
- Grimaud, Louis. *Histoire de la liberté d'enseignement en France depuis la chute de l'ancien régime jusqu'à nos jours*. Grenoble: Allier frères, 1898.
- Guccione, Eugenio. *Philippe Buchez e la rivoluzione francese: Pensiero politico e storiografia*. Palermo: Mazzone, 1993.
- Hacking, Ian. *The Taming of Chance*. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- Haubtmann, Pierre. *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: Génèse d'un antithéiste*. Paris: Mame, 1969.
- Hedley, Douglas. "Enigmatic Images of an Invisible World: Sacrifice, Suffering and Theodicy in Joseph de Maistre." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 125–46.
- Hiebel, Jean-Luc, and Luc Perrin, eds. *Louis Bautain: L'abbé-philosophe de Strasbourg (1796–1867)*. Strasbourg: ERCAL, 1999.
- Hirschman, Albert O. *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991.
- "The History of Diplomacy: The Renaissance to 1815." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, DVD-ROM. 2001.
- "Holy Alliance." *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610b.htm> (accessed May 19, 2009).
- Horton, Walter Marshall. *The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain*. New York: New York University Press, 1926.
- Hunt, Lynn. *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- "Hypostatic Union." *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610b.htm> (accessed May 19, 2009).
- Isambert, François-André. *Politique, religion et science de l'homme chez Philippe Buchez (1796–1865)*. Paris: Cujas, 1967.
- . "Religion et développement dans la France du XIXe siècle." *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 15, 15 (1963): 63–69.
- Jobert, Ambroise. *Un théologien au siècle des lumières. L'abbé Bergier. Correspondance avec l'abbé Trouillet, 1770–90*. Lyon: Centre André Latreille, 1987.
- Keohane, Nannerl O. *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Kohlhauer, Michael. "L'histoire-mal. Approches pour un (non-) lieu littéraire." In *Imaginaires du mal*, edited by Myriam Watthee-Delmotte and Paul-Augustin Deproost, 189–208. Paris: Cerf/Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2000.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. *God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Kors, Alan C. *Atheism in France, 1650–1729: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Kors, Alan C., and Paul J. Korshim, eds. *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France and Germany*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
- Latreille, Camille. "Bossuet et Joseph de Maistre." *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 11 (1904): 263–81.
- . "Bossuet et Joseph de Maistre." *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 12 (1905): 84–106, 257–81, 453–66.
- . *Joseph de Maistre et la papauté*. Paris: Hachette, 1906.
- . "Joseph de Maistre et le jansénisme." *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 15 (1908): 391–424.
- . "Les derniers jours de Joseph de Maistre racontés par sa fille." *Quinzaine*, July 16, 1905, 149–61.
- Lebrun, Richard A. "Introduction: Assessing Maistre's Style and Rhetoric." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *The New enfant du siècle*, 1–18.

- . “Joseph de Maistre and Rousseau.” *SVEC* 88 (1972): 881–98.
- . *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*. Montreal: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 1988.
- , ed. *Joseph de Maistre’s Life, Thought and Influence: Selected Studies*. Montreal: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2001.
- . “Les lectures de Joseph de Maistre d’après ses registres inédits.” *REM* 9 (1985): 126–91.
- . “Maistre and Natural Law.” In Lebrun, ed. *Maistre Studies*, 193–206.
- . “Maistre et Hume.” *REM* 14 (2004), 243–62.
- . “Maistre’s Reading.” In Lebrun, *Maistre Studies*, 42–64.
- , trans. and ed. *Maistre Studies*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988.
- . “Maistrian Epistemology.” In Lebrun, *Maistre Studies*, 207–21.
- . *Throne and Altar: The Political and Religious Thought of Joseph de Maistre*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1965.
- Le Guillou, Louis. “Joseph de Maistre et Lamennais, 1820–21.” *REM* 8 (1983): 85–100.
- Lichtenstein, Jacqueline. “Socrate à la cour de Louis XIV.” *XVIII^e siècle* 150 (1986): 3–17.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964.
- Lovie, Jacques. “Constance de Maistre: Éléments pour une biographie.” *REM* 4 (1978): 141–73.
- Löwith, Karl. *Meaning in History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.
- Macherey, Pierre. “Le positivisme entre la révolution et la contre-révolution: Maistre et Comte.” *Revue de synthèse* 112 (1991): 41–47.
- Maire, Catherine. *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation: Le jansénisme au XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1998.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Edited by Nico Stehr. Translated and edited by David Kettler and Volker Meja. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Manuel, Frank E. *The Changing of the Gods*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983.
- . *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon*. 2nd ed. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1963.
- . *The Prophets of Paris*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Markovits, A. “Joseph de Maistre i Sainte-Beuve v pismach k R. Sturdza-Edling.” *Literaturnoye nasledstvo* 33 (1939): 379–456.
- Martin, Alexander M. “Die Suche nach dem juste milieu: Der Gedanke der Heiligen Allianz bei den Geschwistern Sturdza in Russland und Deutschland im Napoleonischen Zeitalter.” *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 54 (1998): 81–126.
- . *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- Marx, Jacques. “L’idée de palingénésie chez Joseph de Maistre.” *REM* 3 (1977): 113–23.

- Mathiez, Albert. *La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire, 1796–1801: Essai sur l'histoire religieuse de la révolution*. First published 1903. Geneva: Slatkine, 1975.
- McCalla, Arthur. "French Romantic Philosophies of History." In *Western Esoterism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers Presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*, edited by Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff. Leuven: Peeters, 1998.
- . *A Romantic Historiosophy: The Philosophy of History of Pierre-Simon Ballanche*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- McMahon, Darrin. *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . "Maistre's Genius." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 19–30.
- McManners, John. *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1999.
- Mellon, Stanley. *The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958.
- Miltchyna, Vera. "Joseph de Maistre in Russia." In Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, 241–70.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Muirhead, John H. *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy: Studies in the History of Idealism in England and America*. 3rd ed. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992.
- Nakagawa, Hisayasu. "J.-J. Rousseau et J.-G. Pompidon: La 'Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard' et 'De la religion civile' critiqués par l'*Instruction pastorale*." *Dix-huitième siècle* 34 (2002): 67–76.
- Neufeld, Karl-Heinz. "La filosofía cristiana de Louis-Eugène Bautain (1796–1867) y Augustin Bonnetty (1798–1879)." In *Filosofía cristiana en el pensamiento católico de los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Emerich Coreth, Walter M. Neidl, and Georg Pfligersdorfer, 475–83. Nuevos enfoques en el siglo XIX. Madrid: Encuentro, 1993.
- Nguyen, Victor. "Maistre, Vico et le retour des dieux." *REM* 3 (1977): 243–55.
- Oz-Salzberger, Fania. *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Pagden, Anthony. "Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent." In Pagden, *The Idea of Europe*, 33–54.
- , ed. *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Palmer, Robert R. *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939.
- Partridge, Eric. *Origins: An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Pastori, Paolo. "Joseph de Maistre e la libertà." *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto* 55, 4 (1978): 336–58.
- Petri, Barbara Patricia. *The Historical Thought of Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958.

- "Philosophy of History." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, DVD-ROM. 2001.
- Pickering, Mary. "Auguste Comte and the Saint-Simonians." *French Historical Studies* 18 (1993): 211–36.
- . *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2009.
- Picon, Antoine. "Industrie et régénération sociale: Les polytechniciens saint-simoniens." <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/people/faculty/picon/xsts.html>.
- . *Les saint-simoniens: Raison, imaginaire et utopie*. Paris: Belin, 2002.
- Plongeron, Bernard. "Affirmations et contestations du chrétien-citoyen (1789–1792)." In Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité (1750–1840)*, 307–62.
- . "Combats spirituels et réponses pastorales à l'incrédulité du siècle." In Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité*, 247–91.
- . "De Napoléon à Metternich: Une modernité en état de blocus." In Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité*, 635–737.
- . "Le christianisme comme messianisme social." In Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité*, 837–906.
- , ed. *Les défis de la modernité (1750–1840)*. Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours, edited by Jean-Marie Mayeur. Paris: Desclée, 1997.
- . "Parcours de laïcs en Révolution: Ruptures et continuités." In Plongeron, *Les défis de la modernité*, 539–617.
- Popkin, R. H. *Scepticism in the Enlightenment*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997.
- Pranchère, Jean-Yves. "Comte." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1149–51.
- . *L'autorité contre les lumières: La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre*. Geneva: Droz, 2004.
- . "Montesquieu." In Darcel, Glaudes, and Pranchère, *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, 1128–30.
- . "Ordre de la raison, déraison de l'histoire: L'historicisme de Maistre et ses sources classiques." In Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre*, 366–90.
- Reardon, Bernard. *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Reardon, Michael. "The Reconciliation of Christianity with Progress: Philippe Buchez." *Review of Politics* 23, 4 (1971): 512–37.
- Rebotton, Jean. *Études maistriennes: Nouveaux aperçus sur la famille de Maistre et sur les rapports de Joseph de Maistre avec Monsieur de Stedingk*. Bibliothèque de l'Archivum augustinum. Aosta: SOINS, 1974.
- . "Maistre's Religious Education." In Lebrun, *Maistre Studies*, 78–100.
- The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World*. 7 vols. Hartford, 1731–39.
- Rey, Alain, and Paul Robert, eds. *Le grand Robert de la langue française*. 6 vols. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2001.
- Rolland, Patrice. "Proudhon et les leçons de l'histoire constitutionnelle française." In *L'histoire institutionnelle et juridique dans la pensée politique*. Actes du XVIIe colloque de l'Association française des historiens des idées politiques. Collection d'Histoire des idées politiques. Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2006.

- Rosa, Susan. "Seventeenth-Century Catholic Polemic and the Rise of Cultural Rationalism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, 1 (1996): 87–107.
- Rossi, Paolo. *Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Sandström, Erik. "The Doctrine of Correspondences: Both Science and Philosophy." *New Philosophy* 73 (1970): 379–93.
- Sarrazin, Bernard. "Le comte et le sénateur; ou, La double religion de Joseph de Maistre." *Romantisme* 11 (1976): 15–27.
- Schär, Max. *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*. Beisler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft. Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1979.
- Schwab, Raymond. *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*. Translated by Gene Patterson-King. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Scubla, Lucien. "René Girard; ou, La renaissance de l'anthropologie religieuse." In *René Girard*, 105–9. Paris: L'Herne, 2008.
- Skinner, Quentin. "Habermas' Reformation." *New York Review of Books*, October 7, 1982.
- Sonenscher, Michael. *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- . *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Starobinski, Jean. *Blessings in Disguise; or, The Morality of Evil*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- . Introduction to *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, edited by Jean Starobinski. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.
- . *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.
- Steiner, George. "Darkness Visible." Review of *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant*, by Richard Lebrun. *London Review of Books*, November 24, 1988.
- Stepanov, M. [Andrei Shebunin]. "Joseph de Maistre v Rossii." *Literaturnoye nasledstvo* 30 (1937): 577–726.
- Strenski, Ivan. *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Stunkel, Kenneth R. "India and the Idea of a Primitive Revelation in French Neo-Catholic Thought." *Journal of Religious History* 8 (1975): 228–39.
- Tacussel, Patrick. *Mythologie des formes sociales: Balzac et les saint-simoniens ou Le Destin de la modernité*. Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1995.
- Thurston, Benjamin. "Joseph de Maistre: Logos and Logomachy." D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 2001.
- . "Joseph de Maistre: The Paradox of the Writer." In Armenteros and Lebrun, *The New enfant du siècle*, 75–98.
- Triomphe, Robert. "Joseph de Maistre et Herder." *Revue de littérature comparée* 7–9 (1954): 322–29.
- . *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*. Geneva: Droz, 1968.

- Tuck, Richard. *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651*. Ideas in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Tully, James. “The Kantian Idea of Europe.” In Pagden, *The Idea of Europe*, 331–58.
- Van Kley, Dale. “Pierre Nicole, Jansenism, and the Morality of Enlightened Self-Interest.” In Kors and Korshim, *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France and Germany*, 69–85.
- . *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Verçosa Filho, Élcio. “The Pedagogical Nature of Maistre’s Thought.” In Armenteros and Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 191–219.
- Vermale, François. *Joseph de Maistre, émigré*. Chambéry, 1927.
- Viatte, Auguste. *Les sources occultes du romantisme*. 2 vols. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1928.
- Vincent, Steven K. *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Welch, Cheryl. *Liberty and Utility: The French Idéologues and the Transformation of Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Whatmore, Richard. *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say’s Political Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Whittaker, Cynthia. *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786–1855*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984.
- Williams, David Lay. “Political Ontology and Institutional Design in Montesquieu and Rousseau.” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, 2 (2010): 525–42.
- Zenkine, Serge. “L’utopie religieuse des saint-simoniens: Le sémiotique et le sacré.” In *Études saint-simoniennes*, edited by Philippe Régner, 33–60. Littératures et idéologies. Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2002.